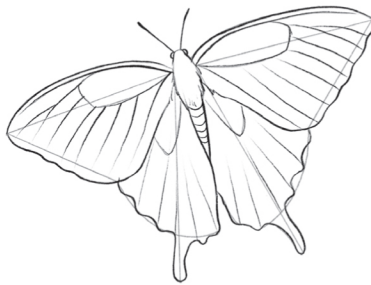
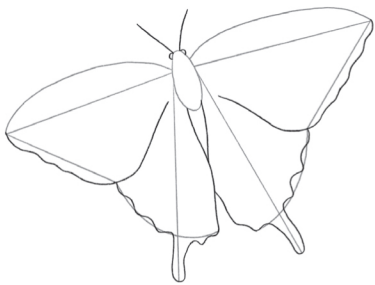


DRAW LIKE  
AN ARTIST

# 100 BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES & OTHER INSECTS

STEP-BY-STEP REALISTIC LINE DRAWING



A SOURCEBOOK FOR ASPIRING ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS

MELISSA WASHBURN



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A Sourcebook for Aspiring Artists and Designers

**MELISSA WASHBURN**





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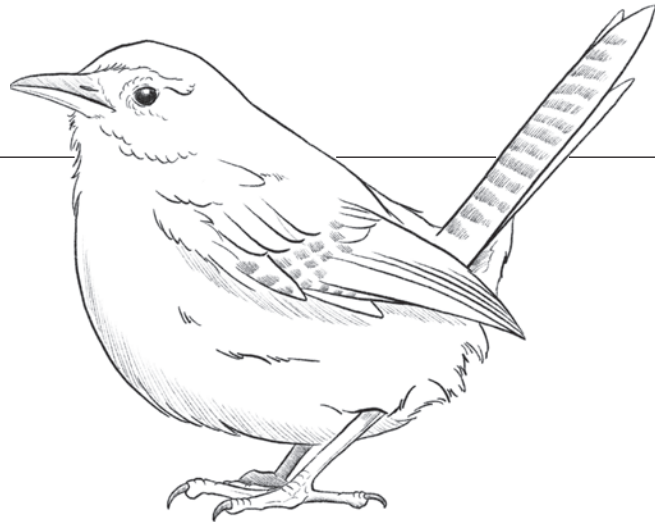
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# INTRODUCTION

My fascination with the natural world started in my childhood in the Adirondack region of upstate New York. I've always needed to know the names, characteristics, and life cycles of the plants, insects, birds, and animals around me, so it seemed natural (no pun intended) that these subjects would become a major theme of my work as an artist and illustrator.

The best teacher for drawing birds and insects is nature itself. Observing different birds and insects in their natural habitats will help you understand how they move and behave. Some of these creatures move very quickly and constantly, making observation difficult, so visiting places like natural history museums and zoos can help you get a better look. Mounted specimens are useful for looking up close at feet, antennae, feathers, etc., that are often lost or difficult to see in photographs, and bird skeletons can give valuable information about the underlying structures hidden by all those feathers. As you become more familiar with anatomy and continue to practice drawing, your work will show more confidence and realism. This book shows birds and insects in a variety of different poses and angles, which can be helpful in understanding how to construct them in a more three-dimensional way.

Drawing any kind of animal can seem very complex at first (it is!), so I suggest first getting a feel for proportions and for the basic shapes that make up the body. Beginning with the underlying shapes, rather than with the exact outer contour of the animal, will give a more solid feeling to your drawing. Once you're happy with the basic shape, you can refine the outline and add legs, wings, and so on. The final step is to add things such as hair or feathers, markings, and other details. You don't need to draw every individual strand of hair or feather—just a few lines to indicate length and direction

will often convey enough information. Scientific illustration follows a more specific set of conventions and level of detail than I demonstrate here, and there are a number of excellent references available on the subject for the interested student.

This book isn't organized by scientific classification but by generally recognized types. Many people think of butterflies as quite different from other "bugs," but they belong to the same class of animals as beetles, grasshoppers, and flies: *Insecta*. All have six legs, three main body parts, wings, and a chitinous exoskeleton. They're fun to draw and fun to learn about. Beetles (order *Coleoptera*) alone includes over 350,000 identified species! They aren't pests but are pollinators, decomposers, and other vital contributors to our ecosystem. Birds encompass a number of different orders, from the *Accipitriformes* (birds of prey, including the bald eagle and red-tailed hawk) to our beloved backyard birds in the order *Passeriformes* such as the northern cardinal and tufted titmouse in North America.

I hope this book introduces you to the basics of drawing some of my favorite creatures and gets you comfortable with and curious about depicting some of the wildlife all around us.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

There are many tools, mediums, and styles in which to draw birds and insects. This book uses some techniques I've learned over the years and shows the methods I've found most useful for understanding the basics of drawing realistically. The figures and steps can be copied directly to achieve a finished drawing, and the processes and methods can be used for drawing many other subjects, whether plants, animals, or anything else.

## Suggested Materials

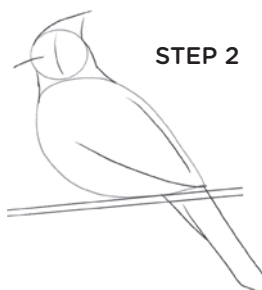
- **Graphite pencil.** At a minimum, a standard HB pencil, but harder pencils (2H, 4H, etc.) are useful for making lighter lines and underdrawing, while softer pencils (2-6B) are helpful for more dramatic lines and shading.
- **Felt tip pens or brush pens**
- **Smooth paper**, at least 80lb
- **Eraser.** I recommend a kneaded eraser, which erases very cleanly without smudging and doesn't leave "crumbs" on your paper.

## Basic Drawing Process

Begin the drawing with your harder pencil so your lines will be light and easy to erase (but make sure you're not pressing too hard and making an indent on the paper). Once you're satisfied with your shapes and basic contour, you can go over the drawing with your soft pencil or drawing pens. You can then erase your lighter pencil lines for a clean, finished drawing.

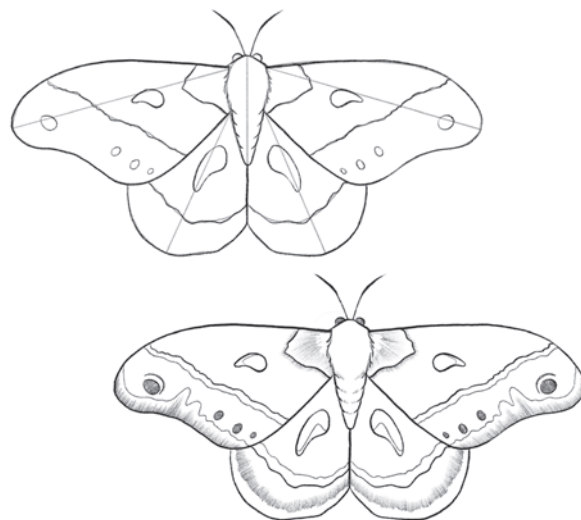
## Blocking in the Figure

Every subject in this book begins with solid shapes or directional lines to describe the general proportions of the subject. It's important to establish the correct proportions in the first step. How large is the head relative to the body? What's the general shape of the animal's pose and main body sections? Next, gestural lines are added to show the position and proportions of features (eyes, beak, etc.), wings, and/or tail. In the example of the cardinal below, step 1 shows simple shapes to establish the placement of the head and body. Step 2 adds some contour/shape to the neck as well as some gestural lines to find the placement of the eye, beak, wings, and tail. Step 3 shows the full contour of the wings and beak and the placement of the feet on the perch.



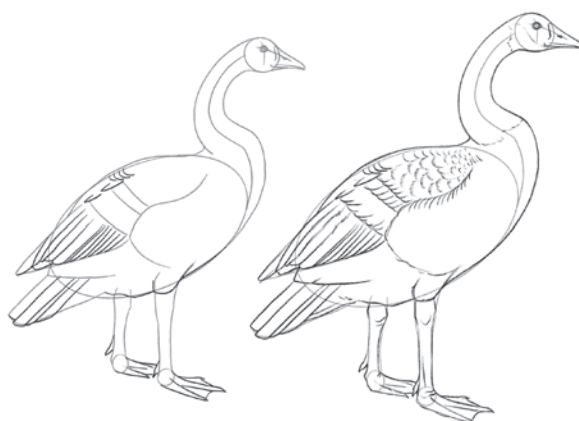
## A Note About Tracing and Symmetry

While nothing in nature is perfectly symmetrical, using tracing as a technique to establish symmetrical proportions and features, especially on insects, can be useful. It's not cheating! You can draw one side of a butterfly, for example, and then trace your work and use transfer paper to flip the image and give yourself guidelines for the other side. As you develop your hand-eye coordination, drawing symmetrically and getting proportions correct will come more naturally, but as a beginner, tracing can be a useful learning tool.



## Constructing the Image

Once you establish the basic shapes and proportions of the subject, you can start to define the more detailed contours and features. The middle steps (generally steps 3 and 4 or 4 to 6) are the construction steps. In this stage of the drawing, you are establishing the three-dimensional quality of the animal. In this Canada goose example, step 4 begins to add some of the individual feathers and the contours of the body around the legs and feet. In step 5, more details are added, and the final lines and surface detail are refined.



**STEP 4**

**STEP 5**

## Adding Details and Cleanup

Final lines and small details come last. Here, you add things such as the suggestion of fur or feathers, surface markings, or a little bit of shading. Once you're happy with your work, go over your contour lines with a pen and add more detail. Finally, erase your pencil lines. In step 7 of the buckeye butterfly drawing, you can still see the light pencil lines of the general shapes we started with, but some final details such as the placement of the butterfly's spots and some of the body fur is added. In step 8, the lighter lines have been erased, and final color and shading have been added to show both the coloring and more of a suggestion of the fuzziness of the butterfly's body. In this final step, any shading to show shadows will also be added.



**STEP 7**



**STEP 8**

If you're new to drawing, you can copy the steps in this book exactly. As you become more advanced in your drawing practice, you can apply these steps and techniques to other birds and insects you observe and to entirely different subjects. The species shown in this book are very general examples, so keep in mind that many animals (for example, swallowtail butterflies or hawks) include multiple species, each having slightly different features, proportions, and coloring. Also, just as with people, every animal has its own distinguishing features and personality that will vary a lot from individual to individual. Observing these differences and capturing them in your drawings will improve your skills and bring more personality to your work.

## TIPS FOR BETTER LINE CONTROL

All the drawings in this book are line drawings, so here are some tips and tricks to make your lines smoother and more controlled. Even though we're only using lines to create realistic birds and insects, with good line control your drawings can become more polished and lifelike.

### TIP #1: DRAW WITH MORE THAN JUST YOUR HAND AND WRIST

Beginners tend to grip their pencil very tightly and move just the hand/wrist. Drawing isn't at all like writing. Practice loosening the grip on your pencil and moving your entire arm when you draw. You'll find that your lines become smoother and more consistent. Turn your paper if you need to, pulling *down* the page to create a smooth line. (It's much easier to pull your lines down than to push them up the page.) Drawing large—using an 11" x 17" (27.9 x 43.2 cm) or larger sheet if you can—will also help.

**EXERCISE.** Using your favorite drawing tool, draw on a large piece of paper or chalkboard, and just practice getting smooth lines by drawing large, simple shapes. Create circles, ovals, or triangles in one long, large stroke moving from your shoulder. This is a good warm-up exercise before you begin drawing each day.

### TIP #2: ALWAYS “DRAW THROUGH”

When drawing shapes for things such as legs, get in the habit of drawing the complete form, even if it overlaps or will be hidden by another part of the animal. This ensures that you'll draw the full shape accurately and will not accidentally distort it by trying to fit it around the other forms. In this example from the book, the complete body and wing shapes are shown overlapping in these steps, even though in the finished drawing the body is hidden by the wing. Understanding the placement of the features you can't see will give a more realistic, three-dimensional look to your work.



### TIP #3: VARY THE LINE THICKNESS

Varying the thickness of the line as you draw will immediately make your drawing look more interesting and dynamic. As suggested earlier, a softer pencil (or a softer felt-tip ink pen or brush pen) will allow you to easily change your line weight with slight pressure changes as you draw.

**EXERCISE.** On a large sheet of paper, draw with a felt-tip or brush pen. Make a series of lines, experimenting with varying the line thickness, using more or less pressure on the same line as

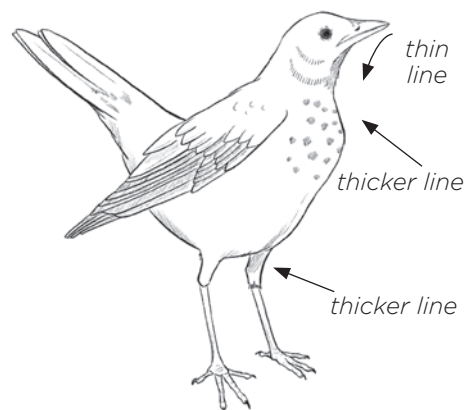


you draw. Also experiment with holding your drawing tool at a different angle to see how it affects the thickness and quality of the line. Try drawing the lines more slowly or more quickly, and see what effect this has on the line quality as well.

#### TIP #4: USE LINE WEIGHT TO SUGGEST LIGHT OR SHADOW

The thickness of your line can suggest light or shadow in a drawing. Thin lines will make a surface seem more well lit while a thicker line will suggest contrast and shadow. This will also add drama to your drawing. In addition, when drawing fur or feathers, it isn't necessary to show every single individual strand. A few lines to establish the direction of the feathers, and some marks to show what's in shadow, will be enough to give the body dimension.

**EXERCISE.** Draw simple household objects like fruit or a cup. Note which direction the light is coming from, and use thinner lines on the edges that face the light source and thicker lines on the edges that are furthest away from the light. Once you're comfortable using this technique for simpler objects, you can do the same with more complex subjects such as birds and insects.



#### TIP #5: SHADING

In addition to using thin or thick lines to suggest light or shadow, you can use a couple of techniques in your line drawing to create more dramatic shading and shadows. In this instance, I use “shading” to mean areas that are inherently darker than others, not necessarily due to cast shadows. Lines drawn closer together will create a darker area; lines drawn farther apart will create more subtle shading. You can also use the side of your pencil to quickly shade or fill in an area evenly. Don't let markings such as stripes or spots distract you from the underlying form of the animal. These markings should be added last and will follow the contours of the surface of the animal. The butterfly below shows the full form of the animal in step 6, then lines showing the placement of the spots and other markings (following the contour of the wing) are added, and in the final step shading is added along with the final dark markings.



STEP 6



STEP 7

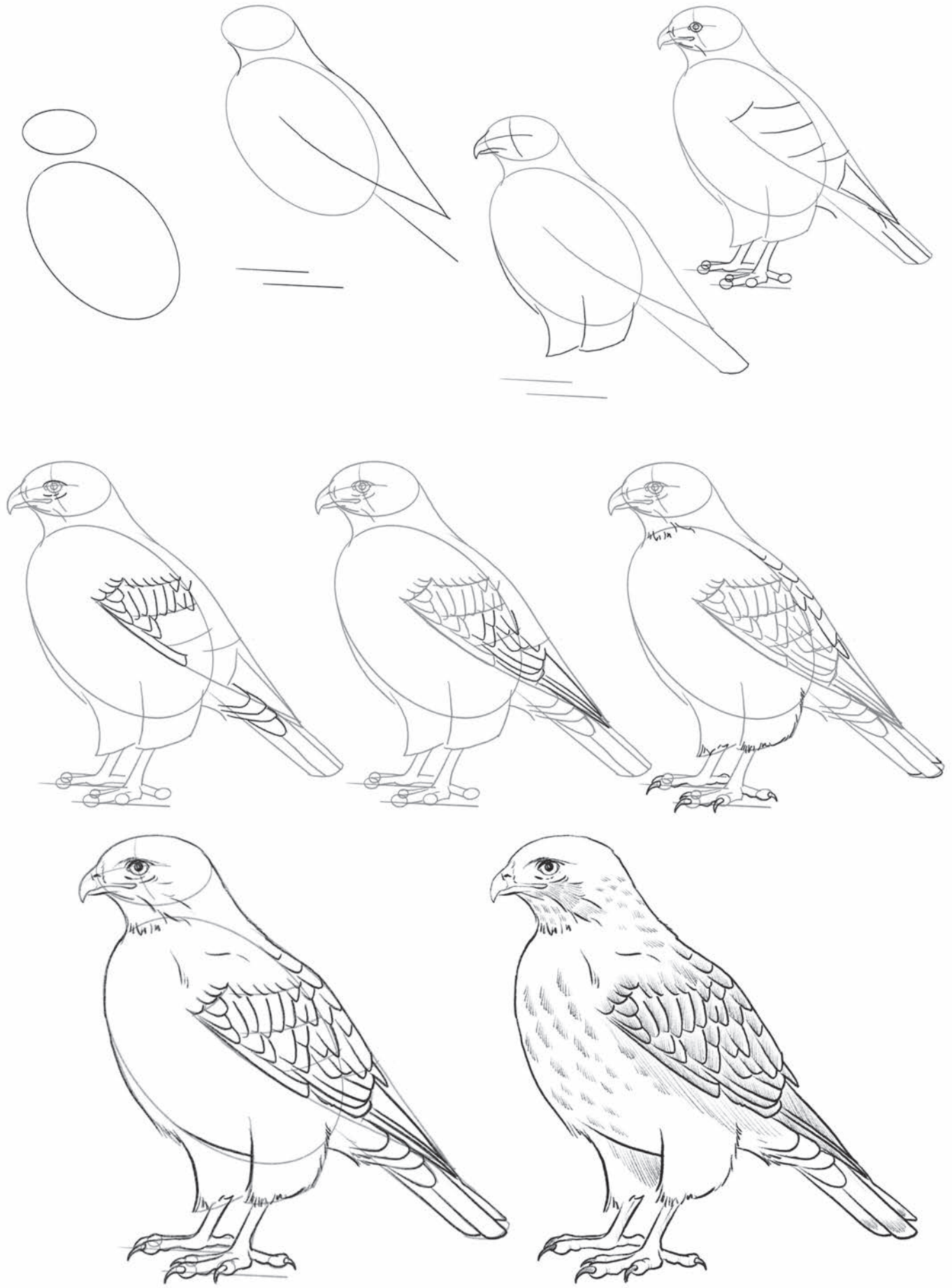


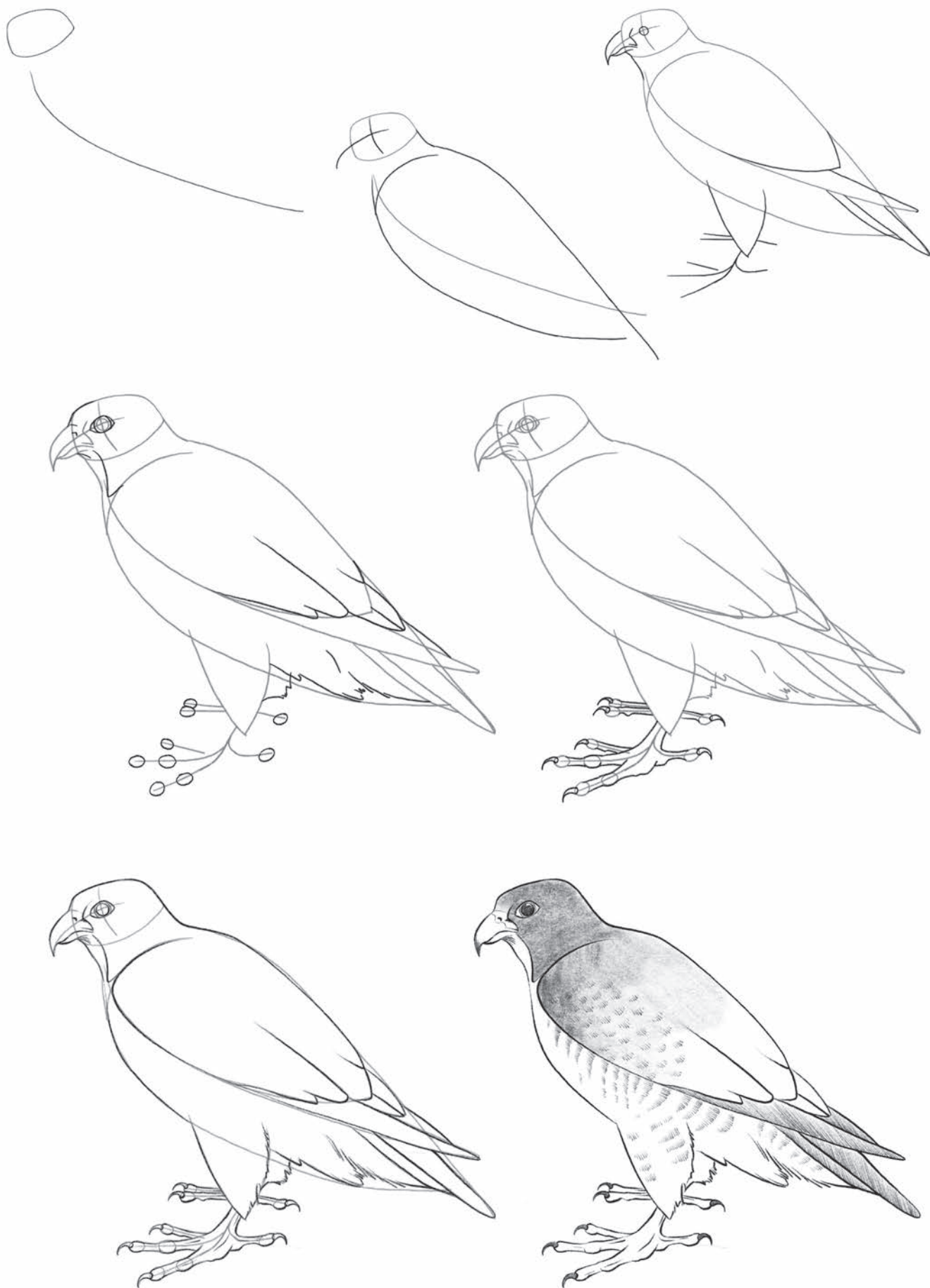
STEP 8

**EXERCISE.** Create a simple still life from a few simple objects, and overlap one object in front of the other. First use the side of your pencil to create smooth shading on the darkest object(s). Then observe where the darkest parts of the shadows are, and use parallel lines very close together to shade those areas. Use lines drawn a little farther apart to shade areas that aren't quite as dark. Layering these techniques together will allow you to describe both the relative colors of objects just in black and white as well as capture the light and shadow falling on the objects.

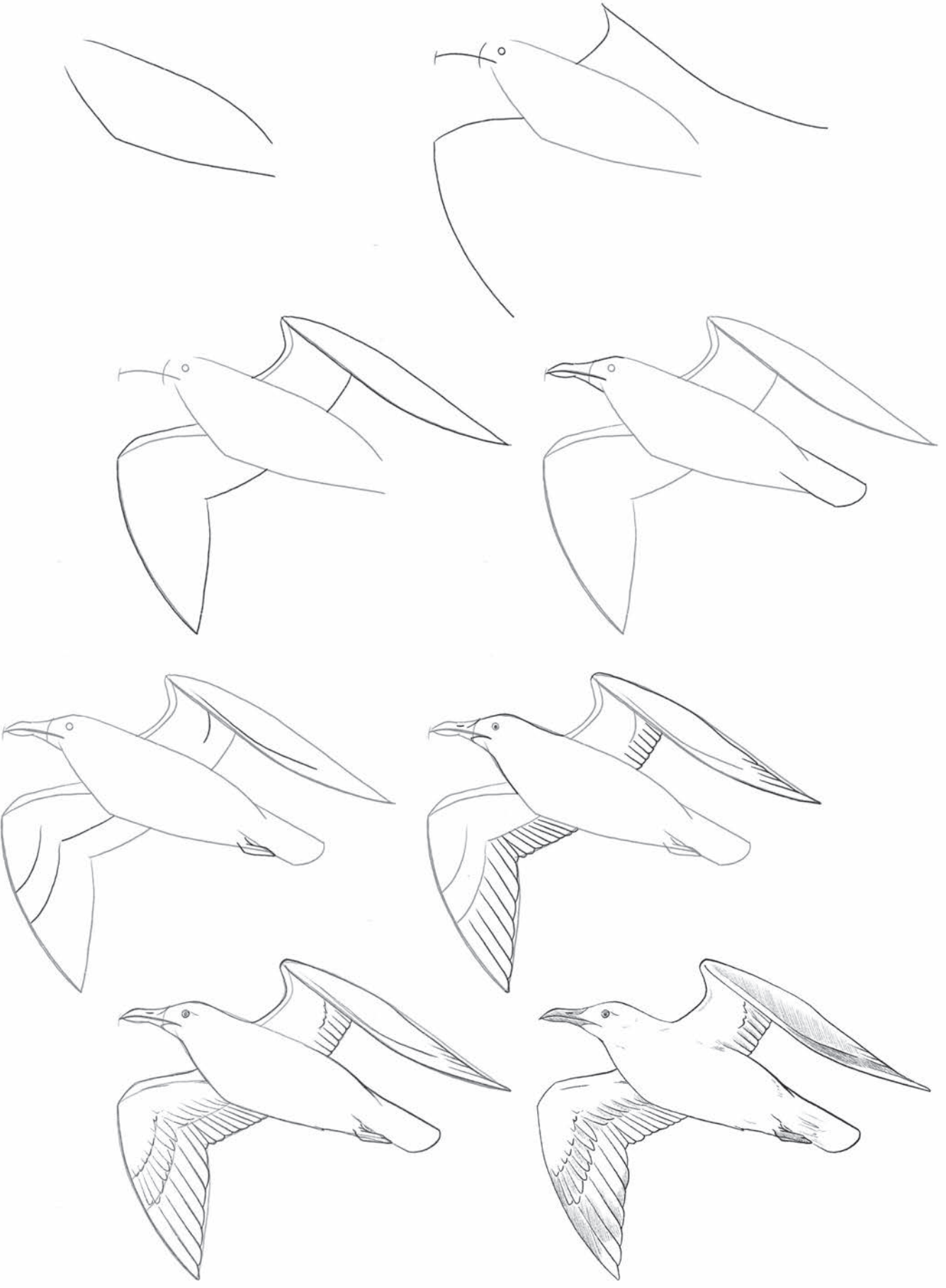


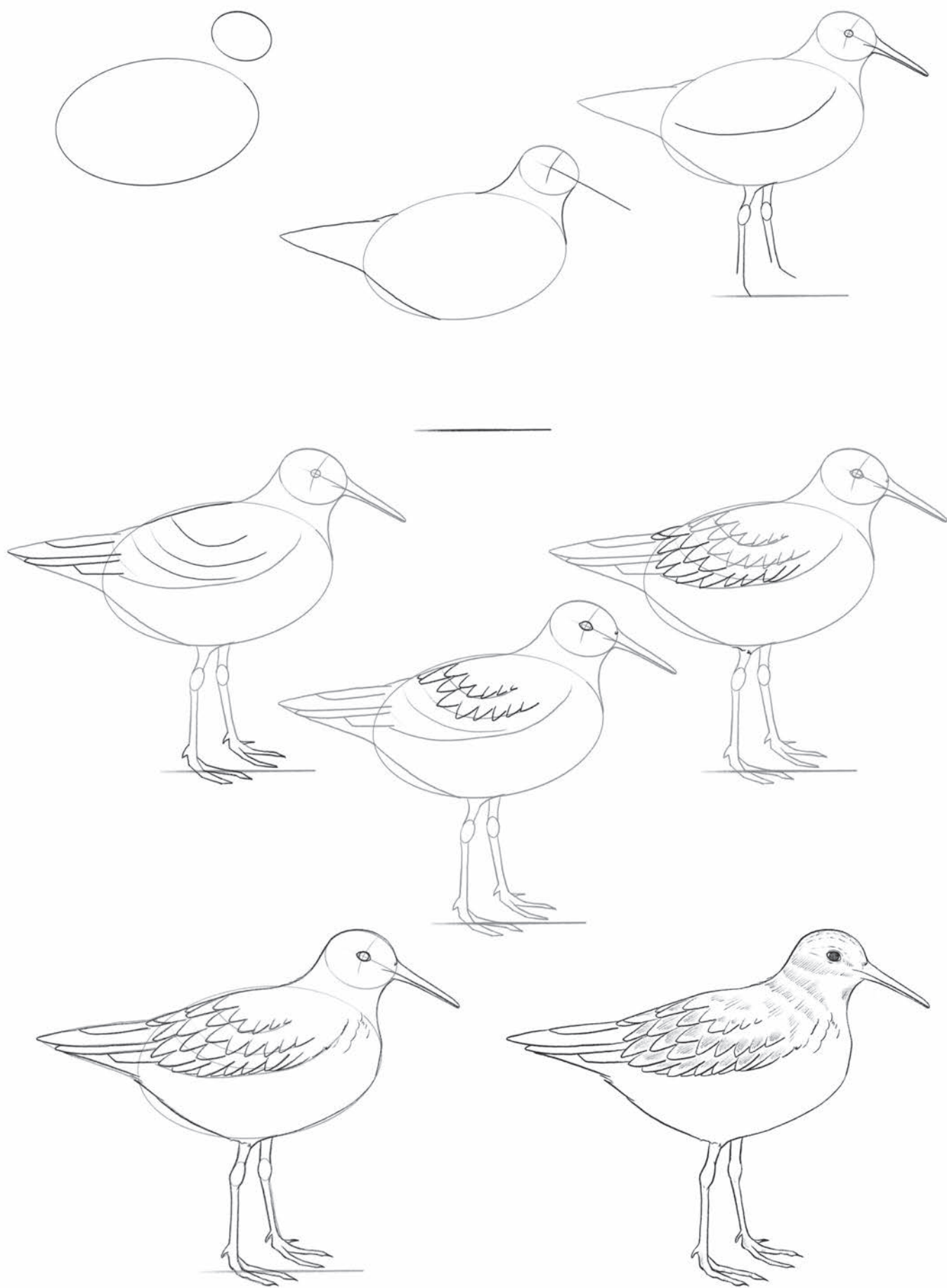


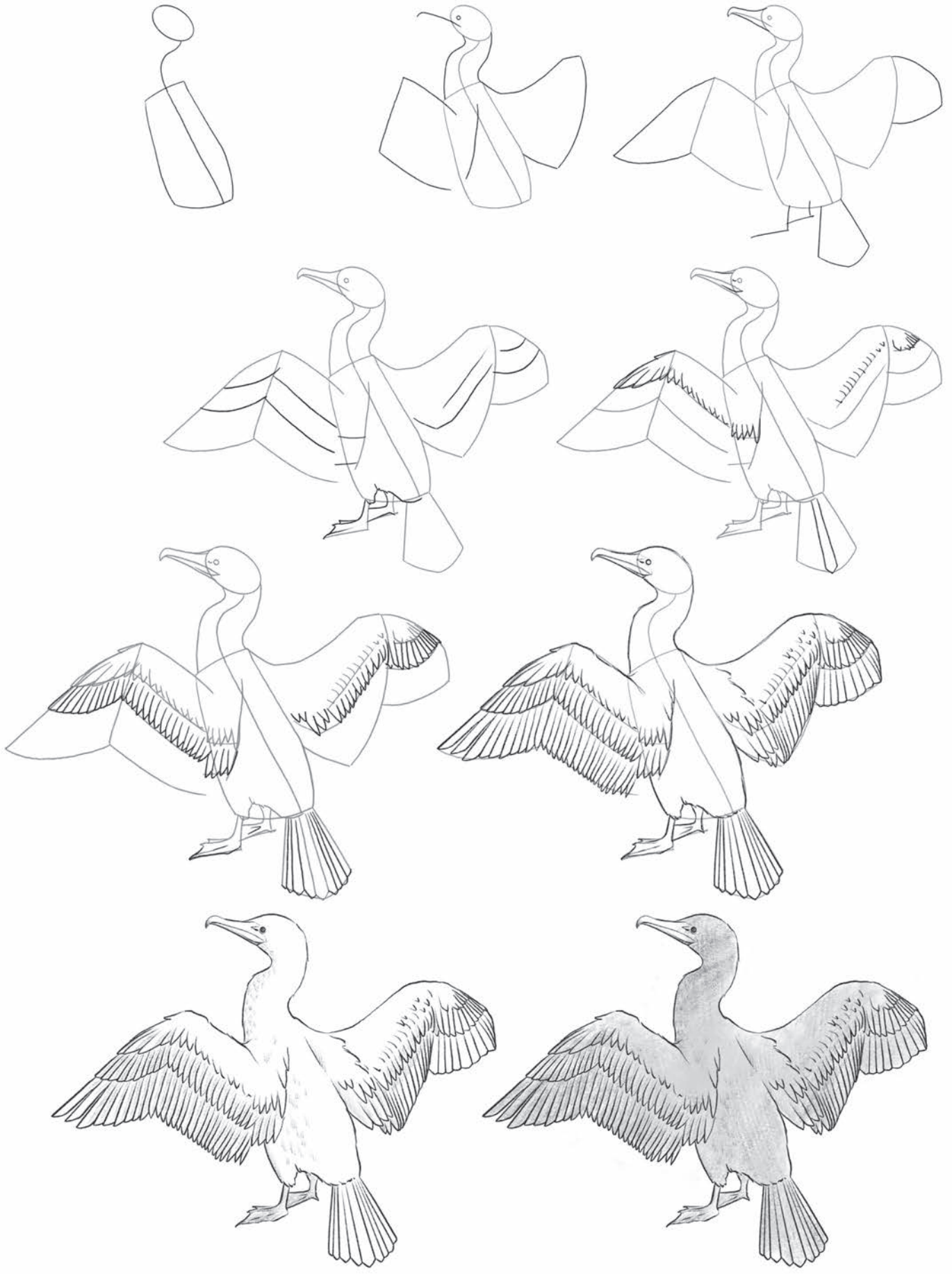


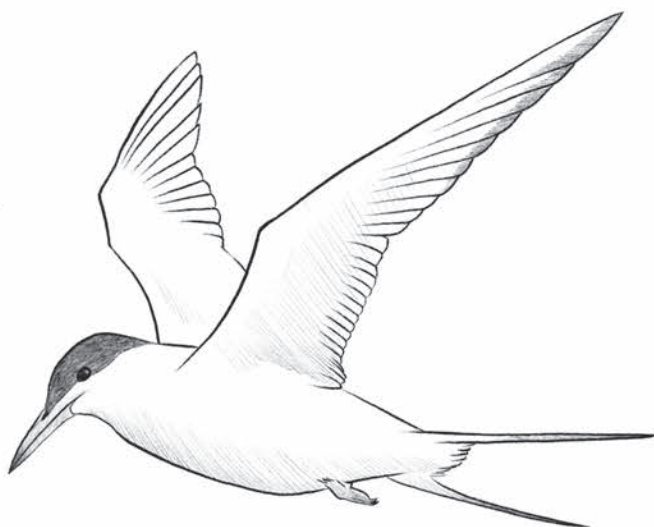
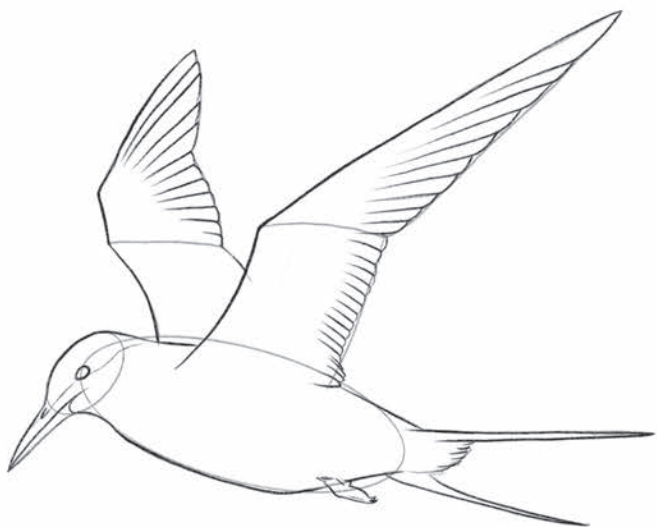
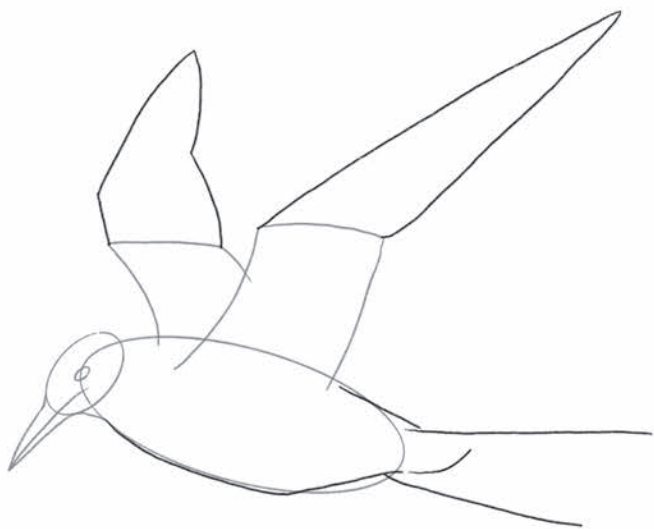
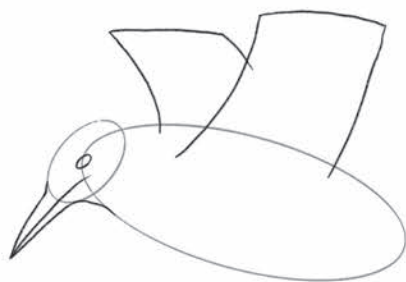
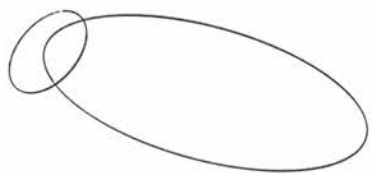




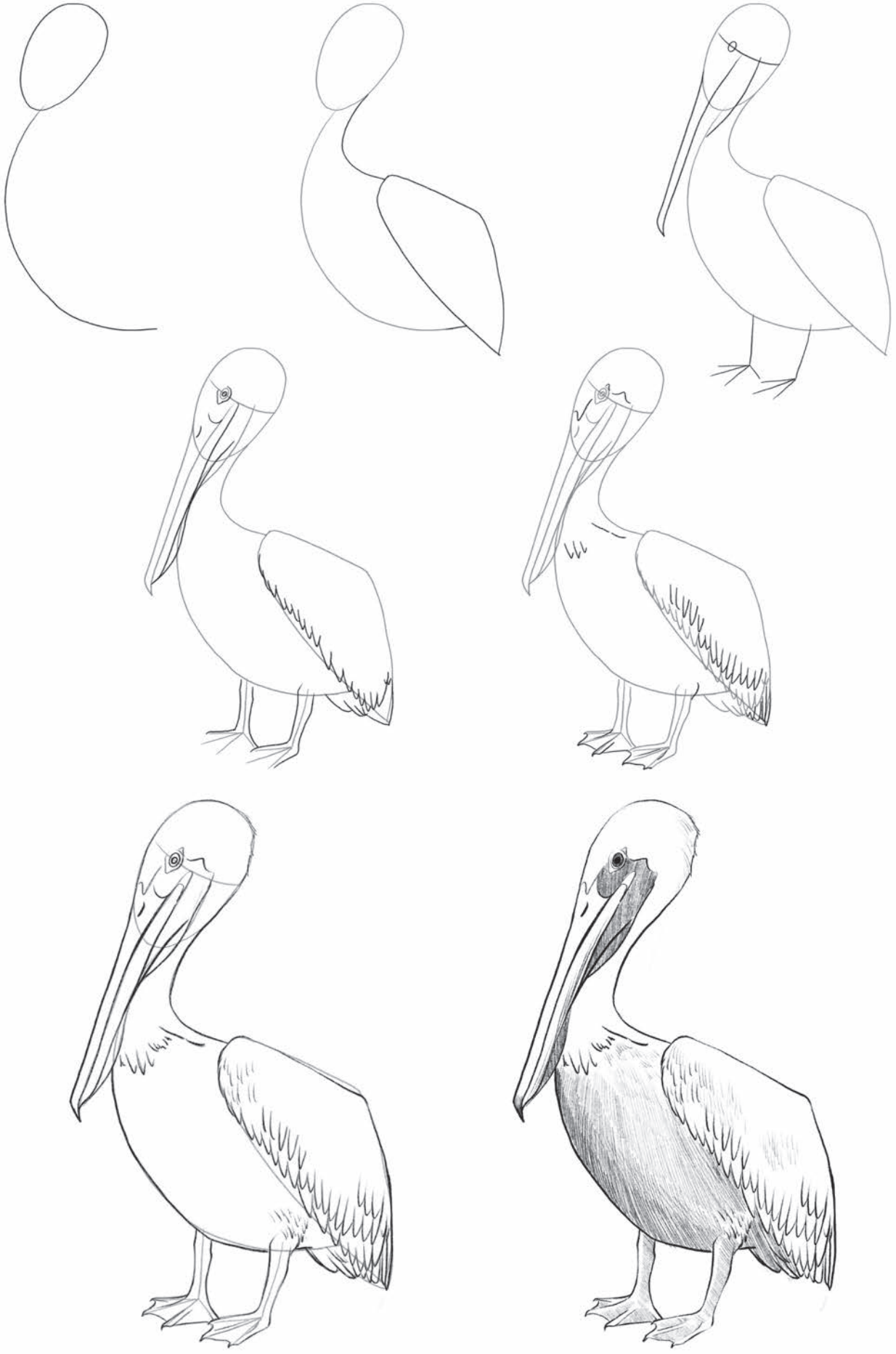




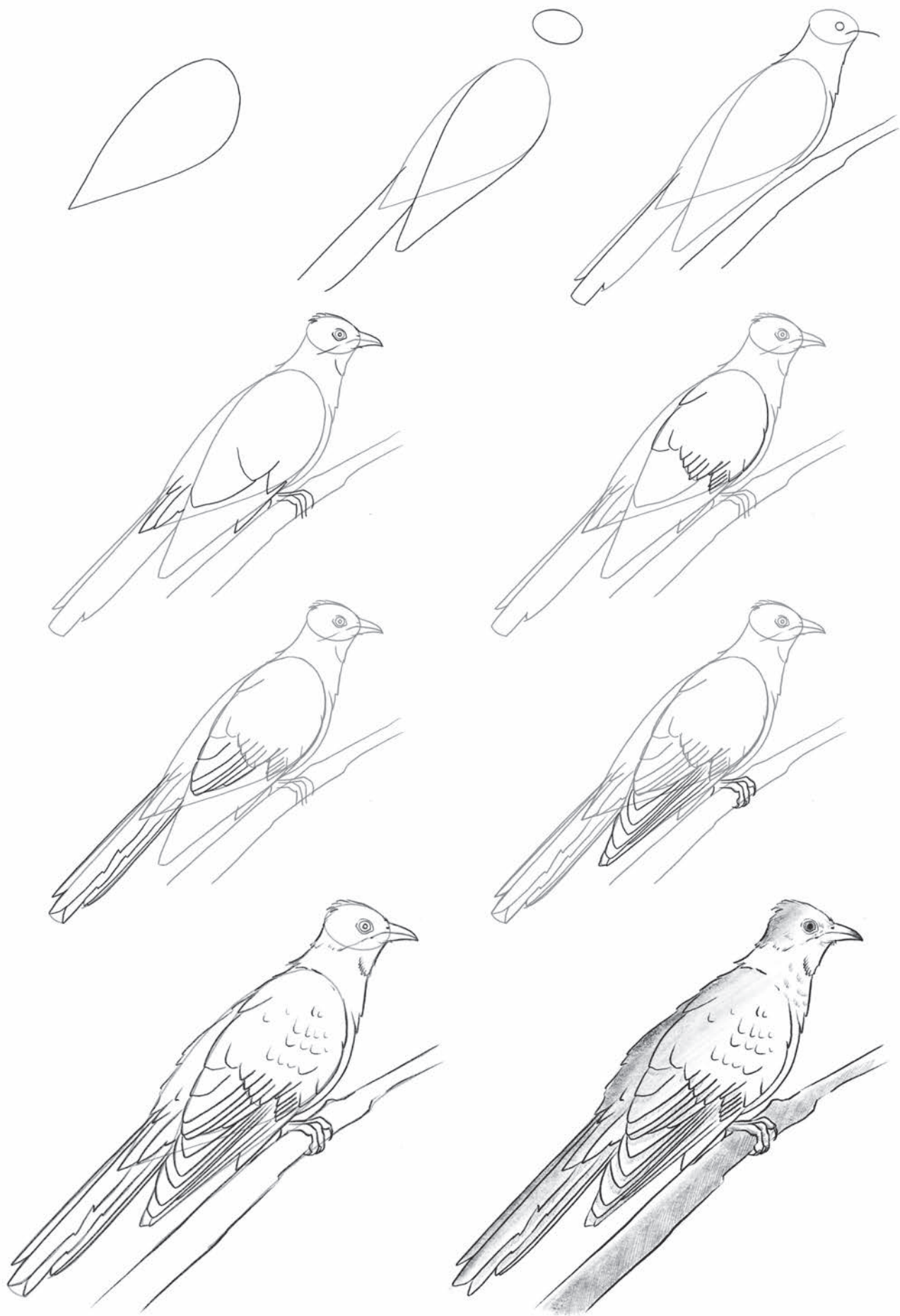


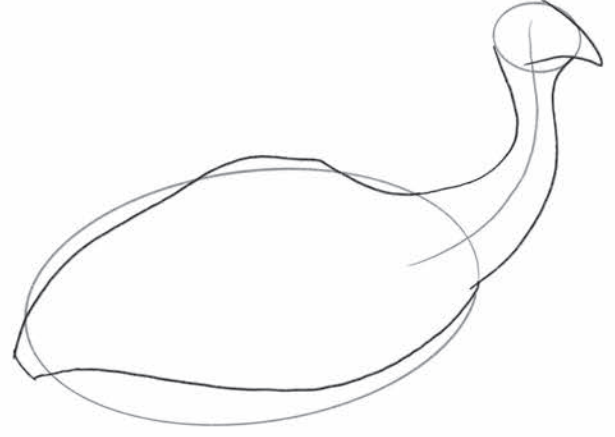
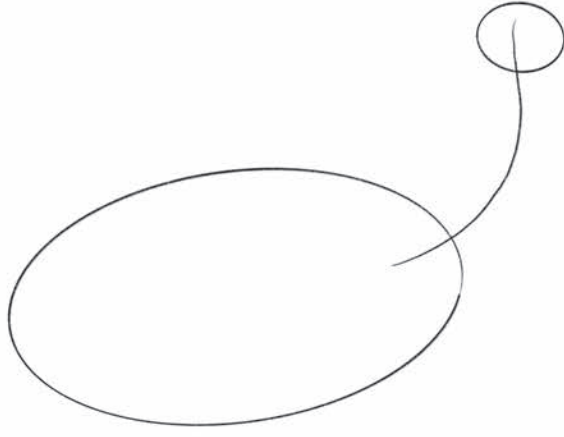
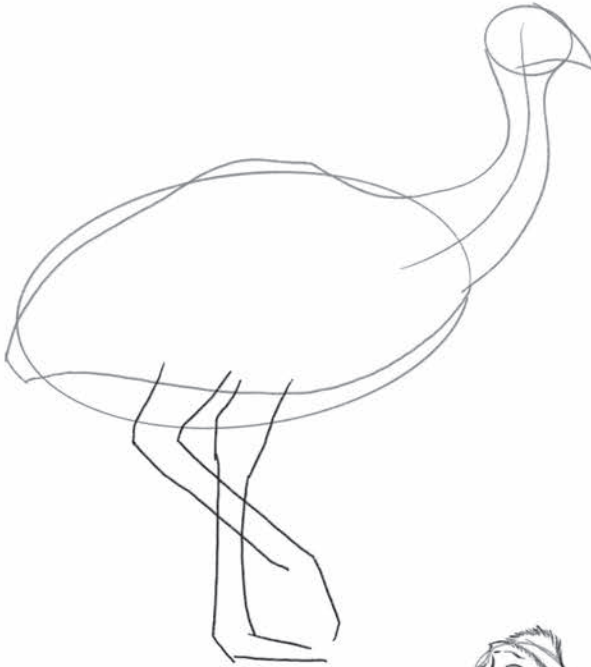


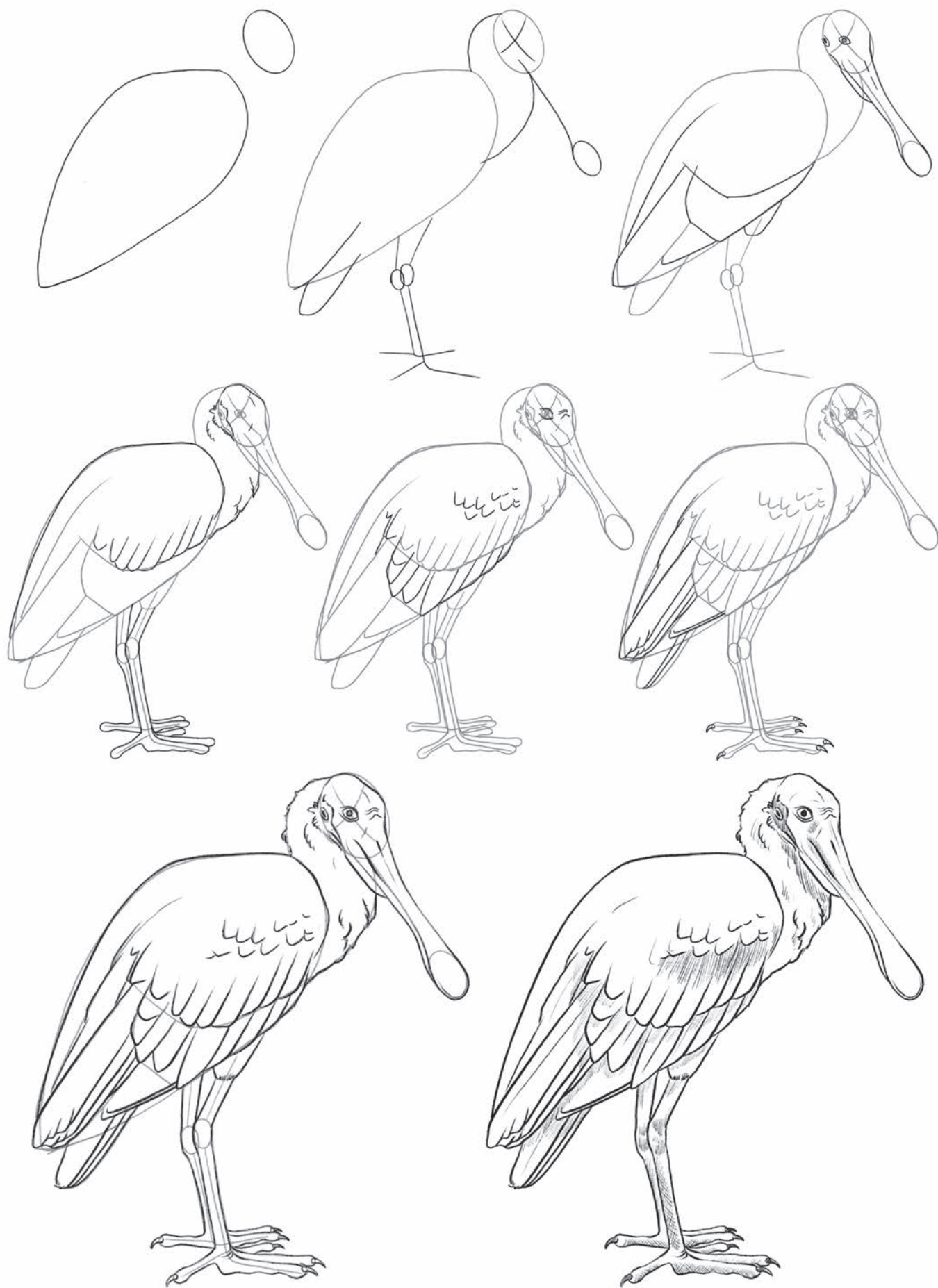




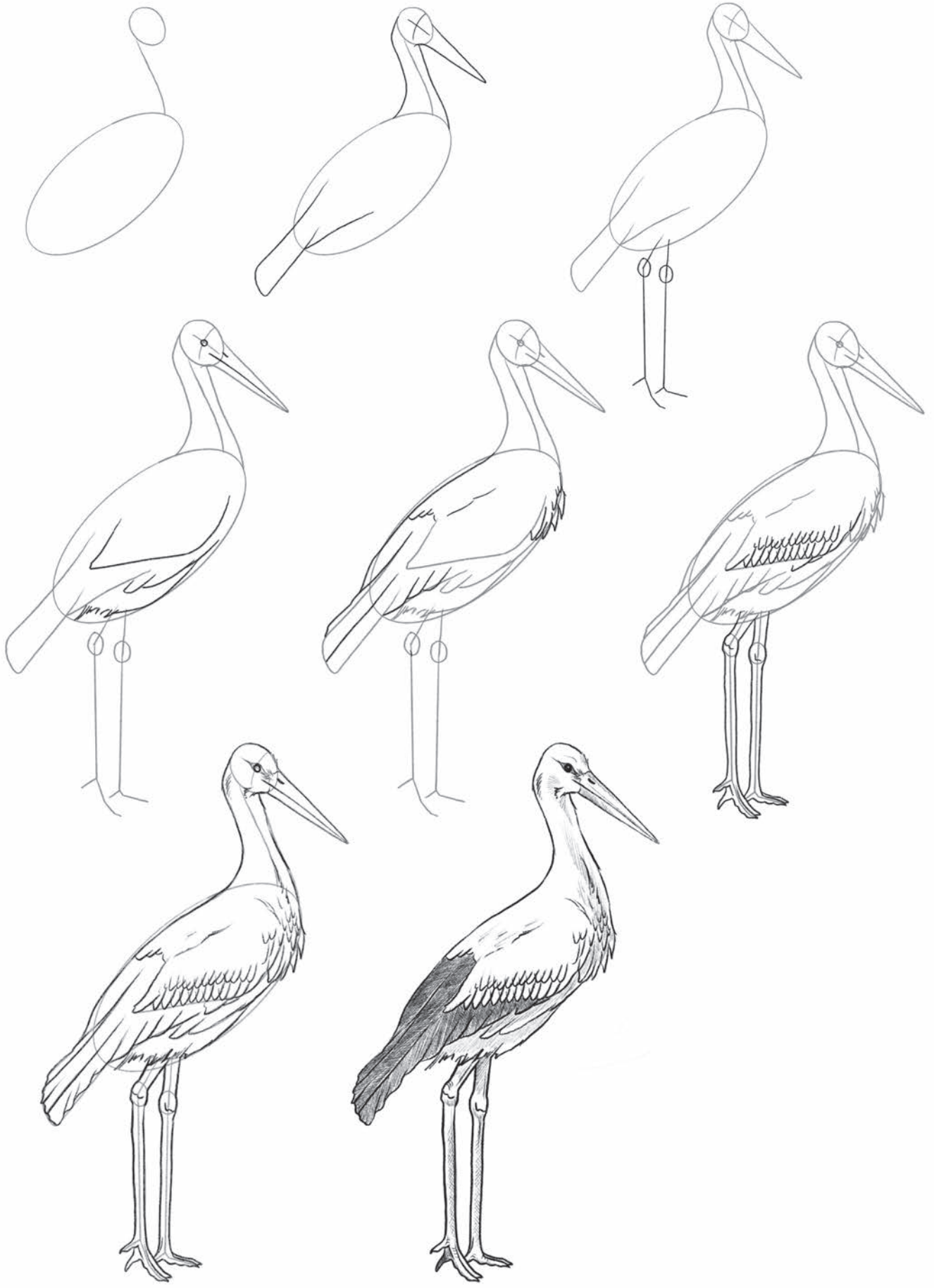


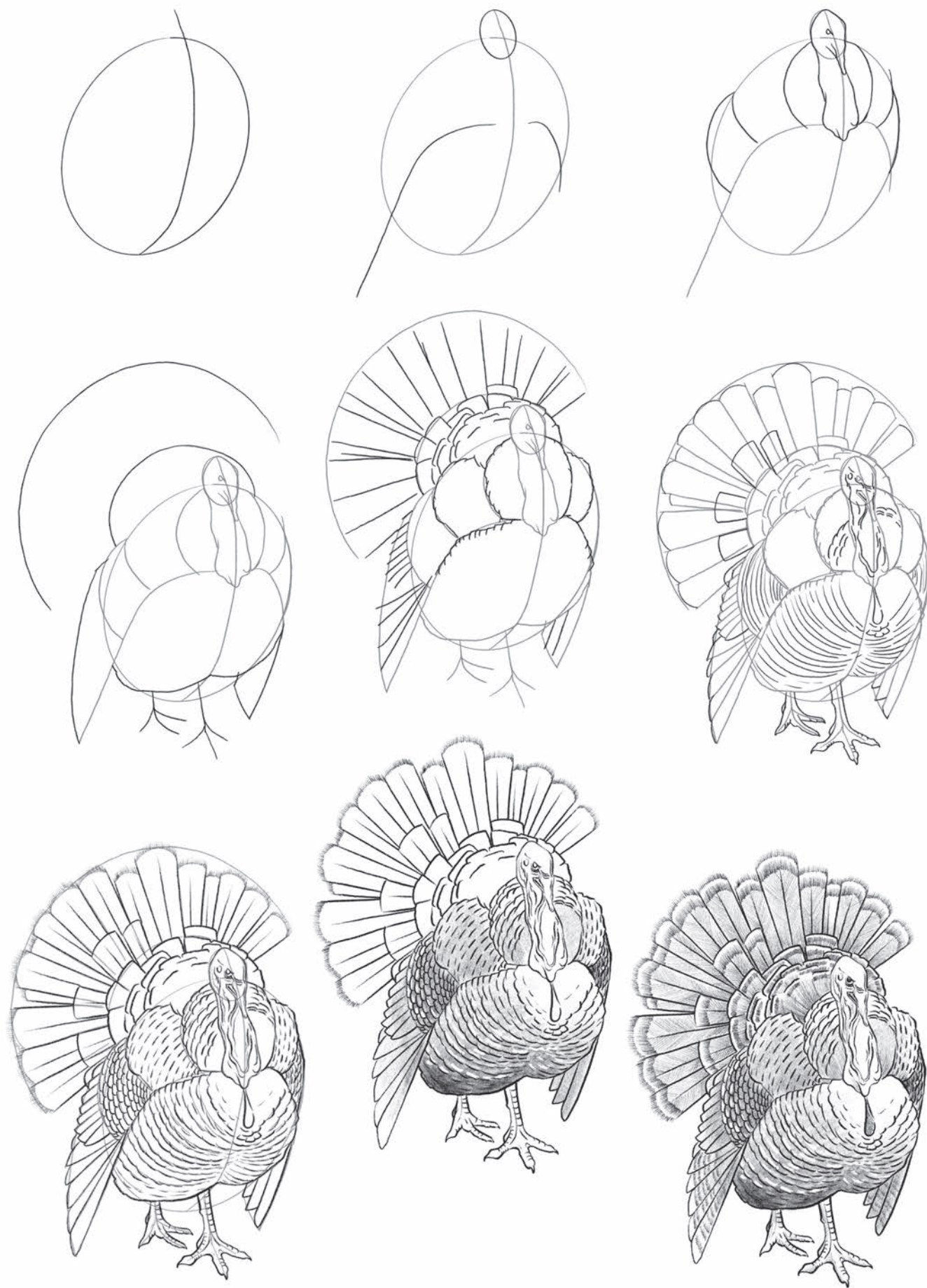


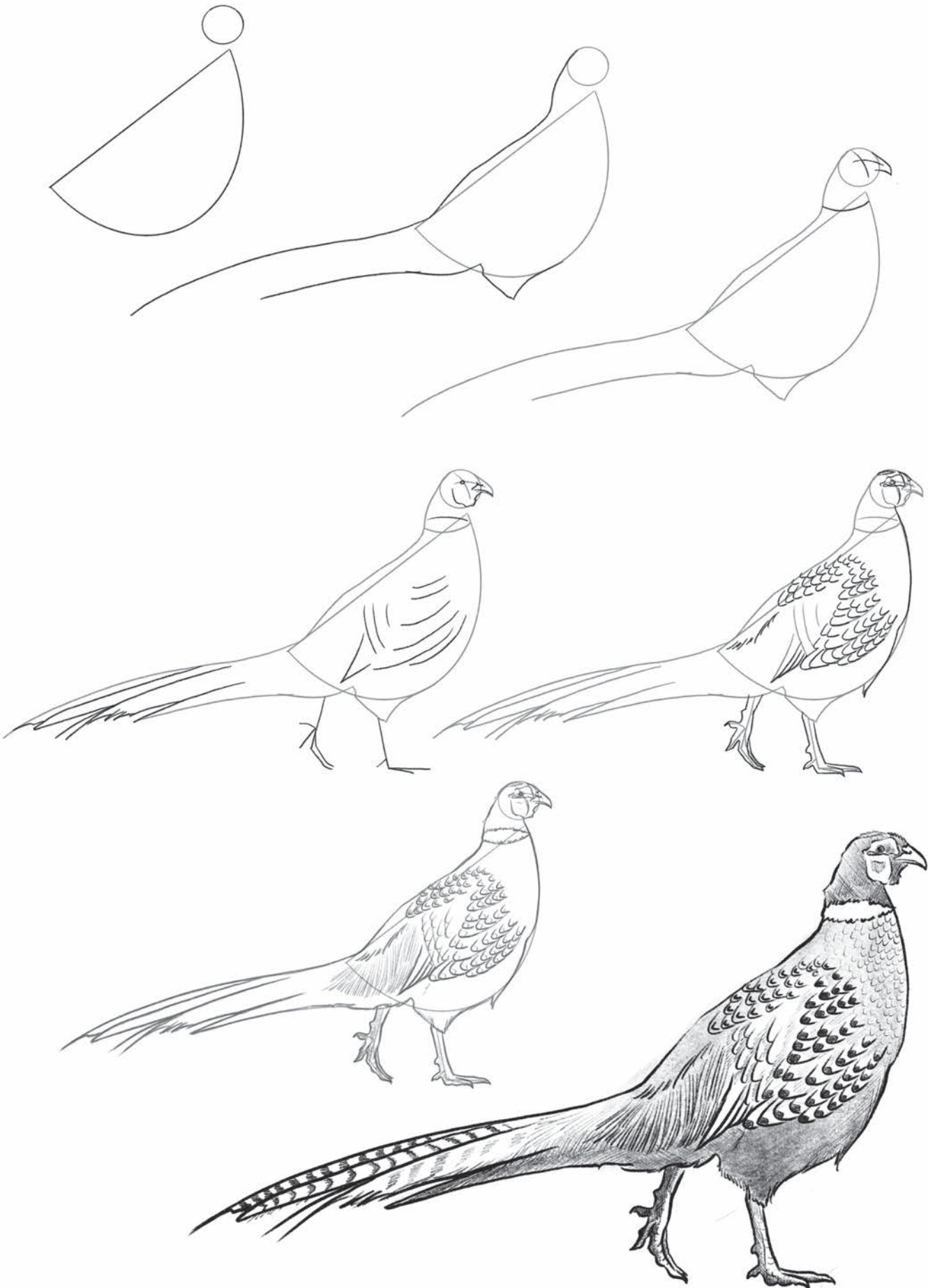




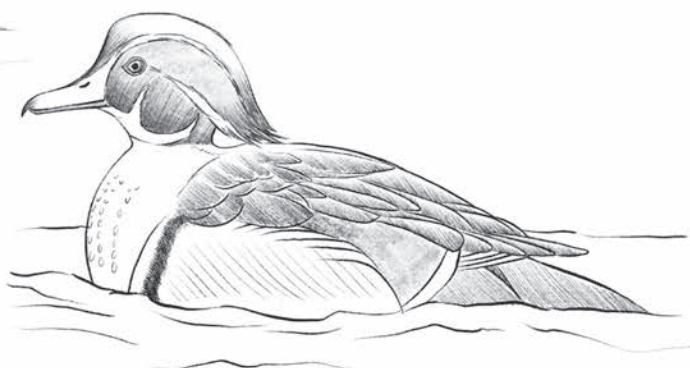
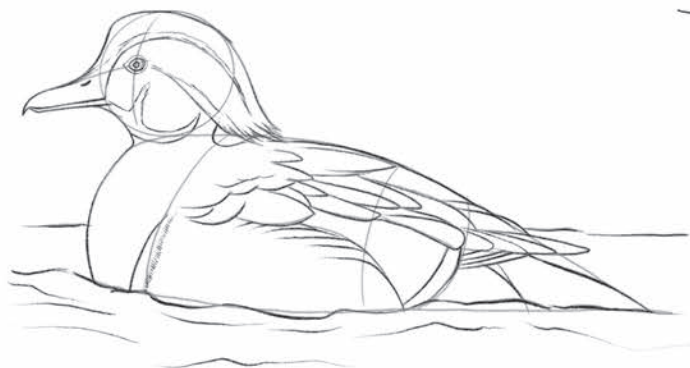
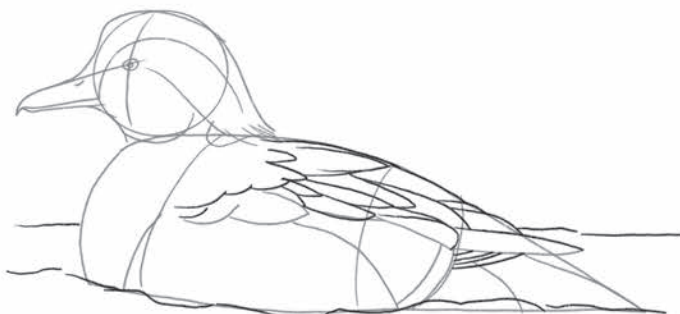
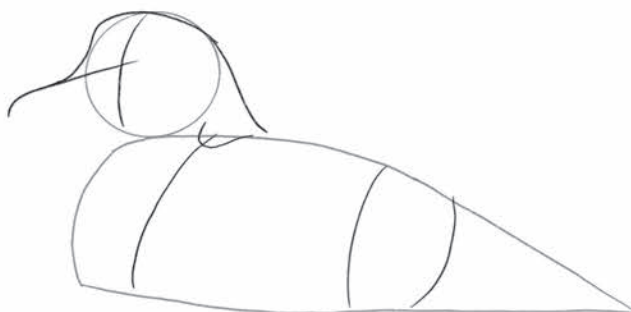
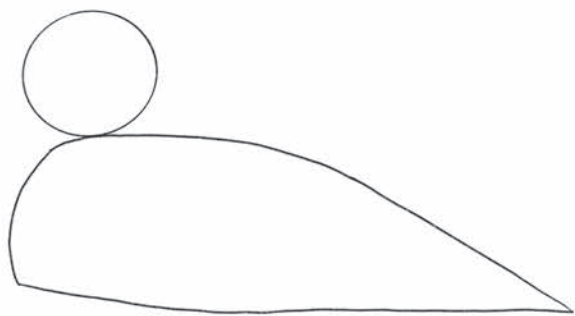


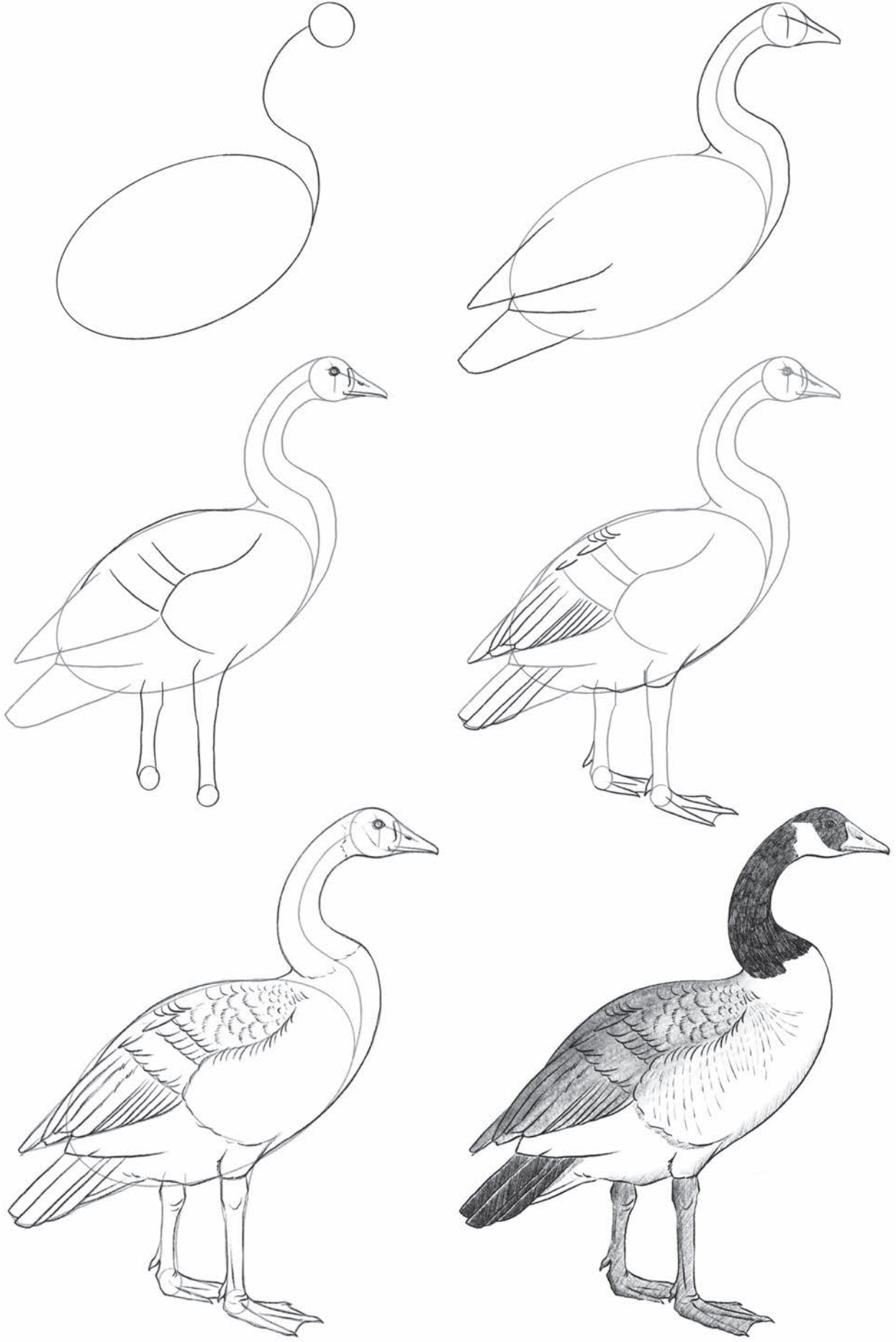




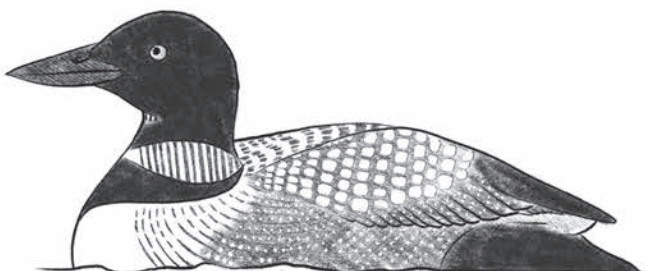
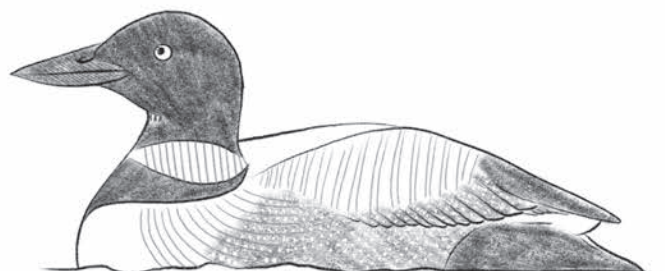
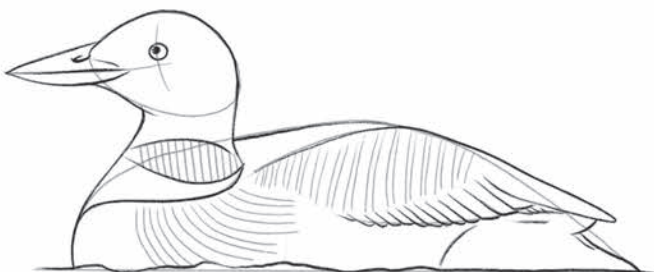
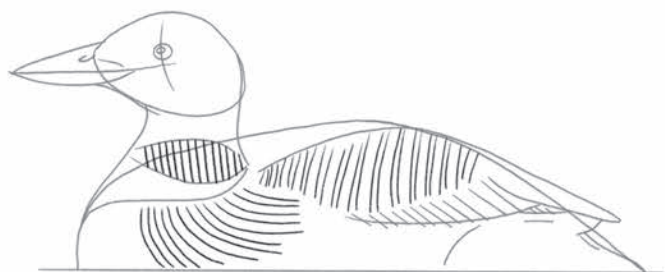
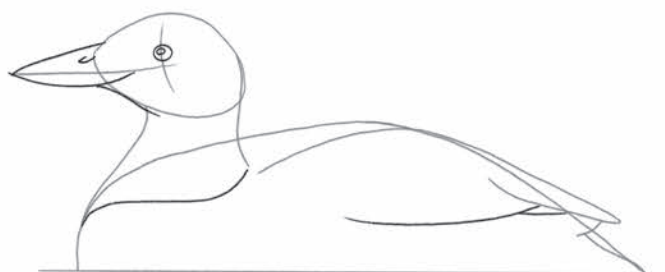
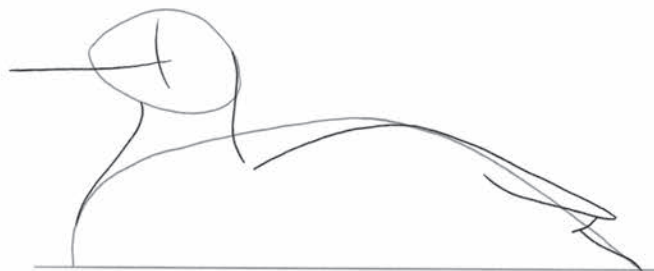
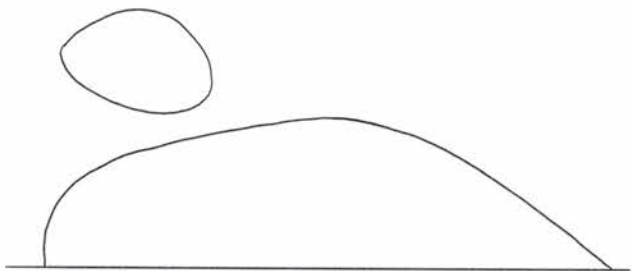


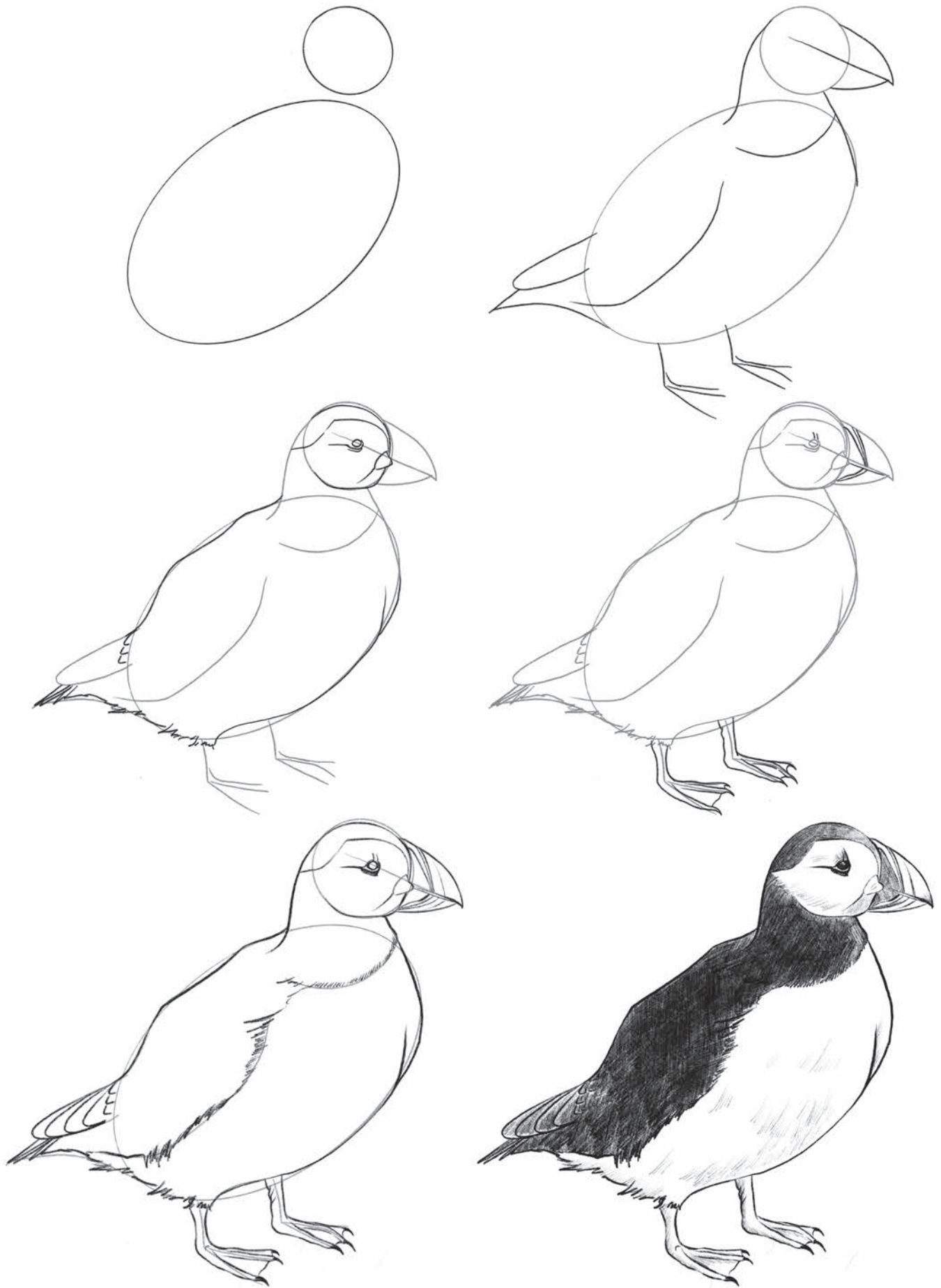


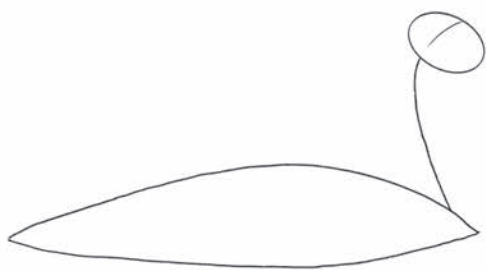


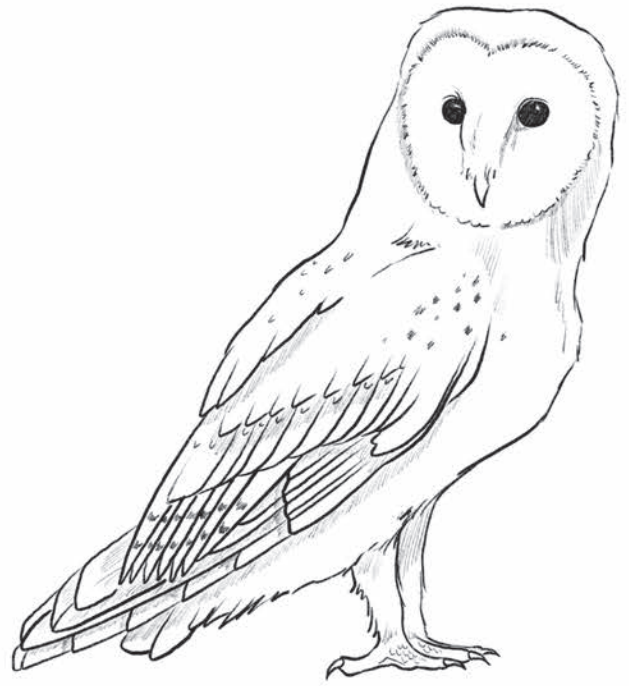
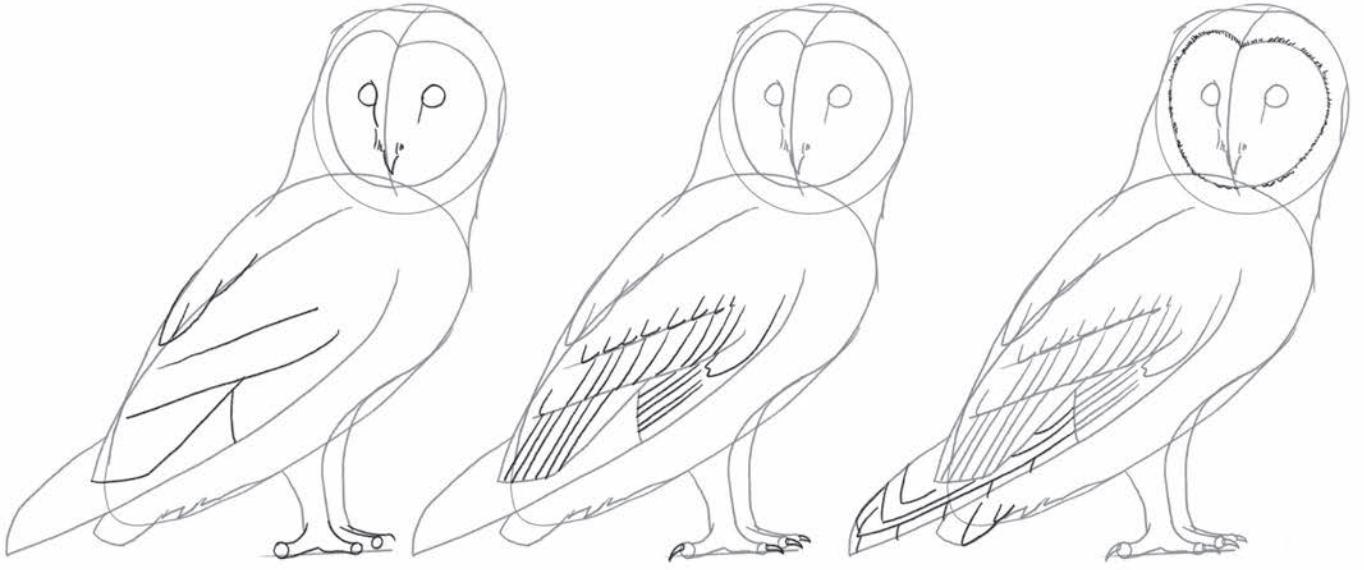




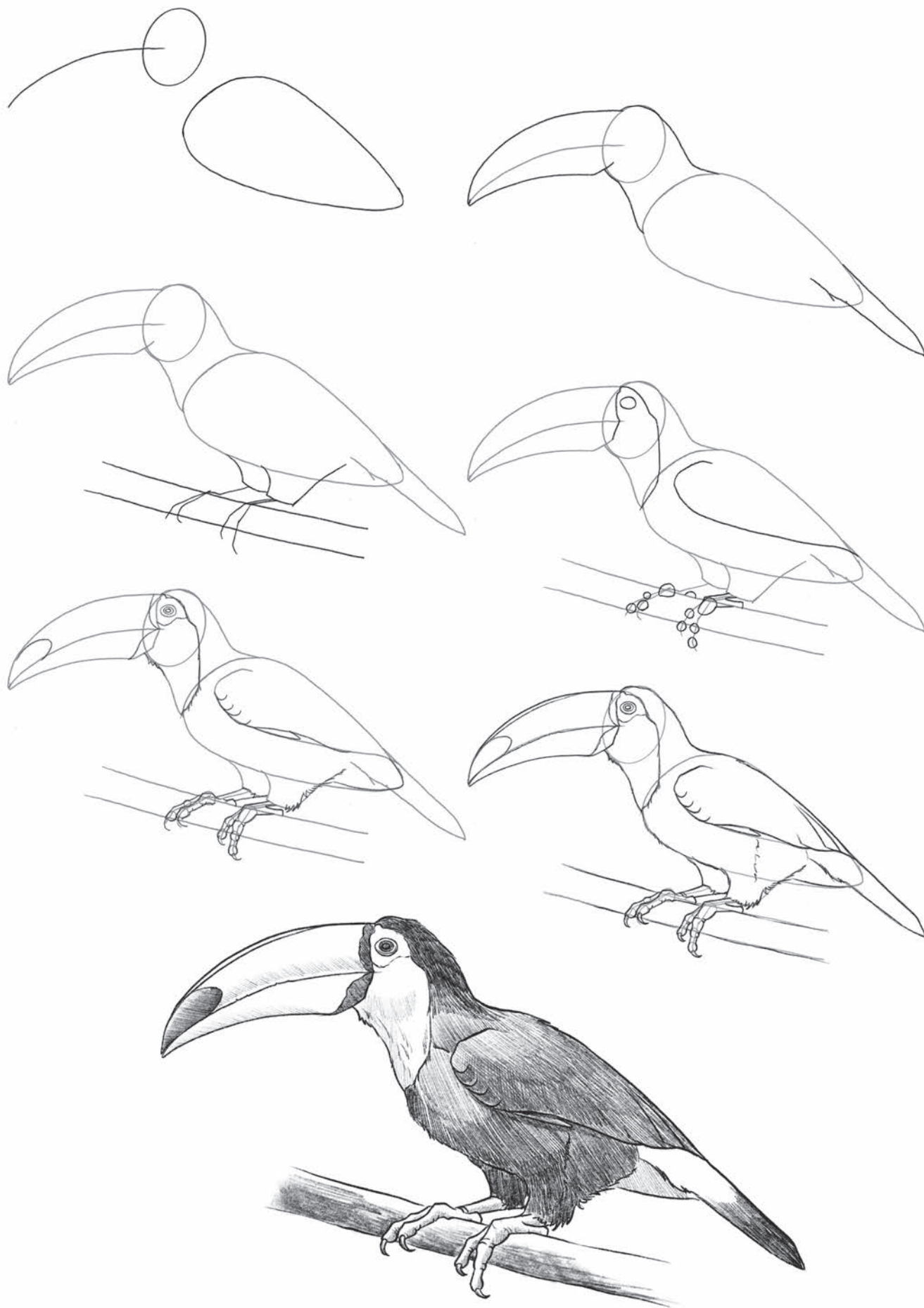


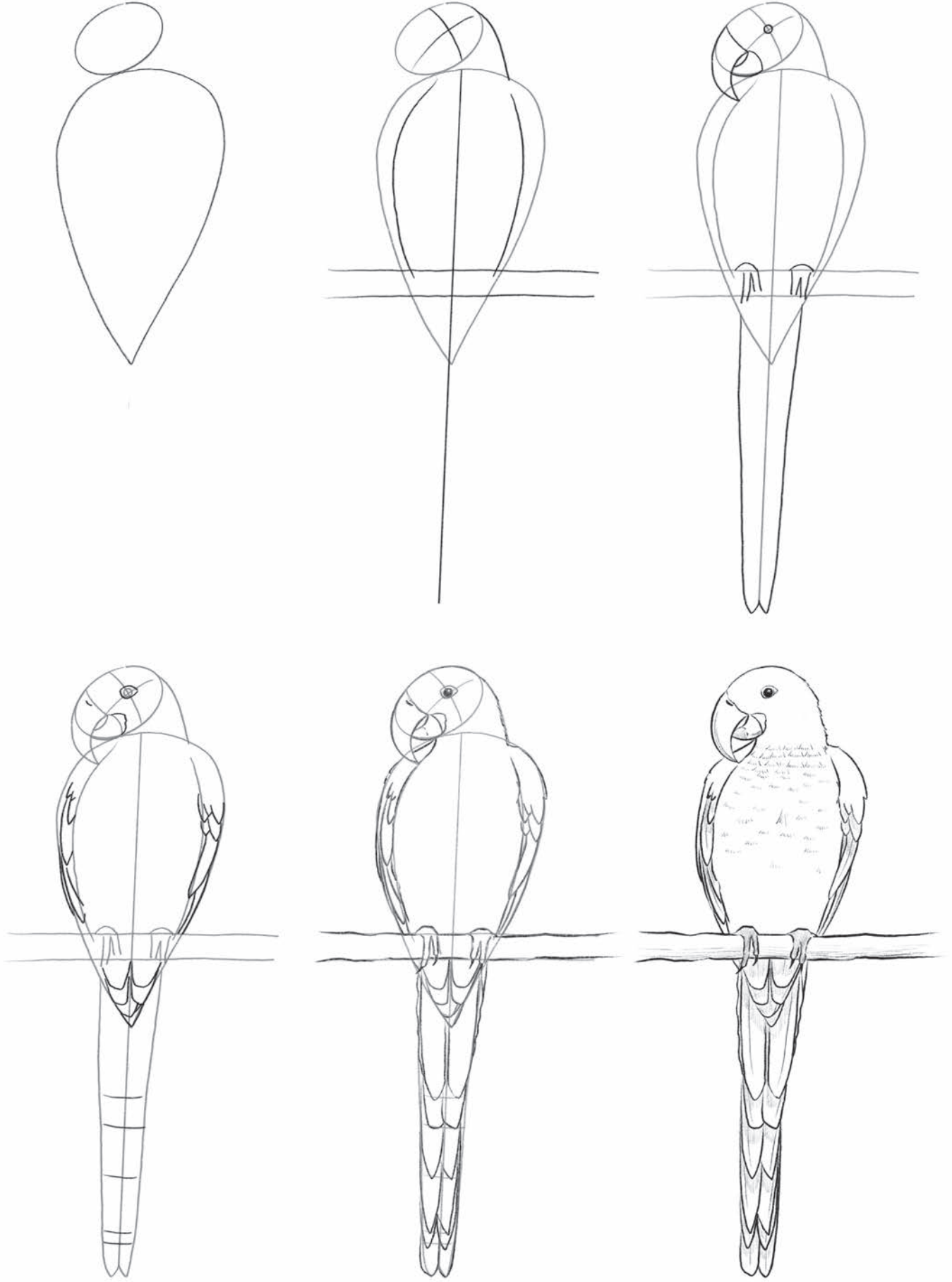


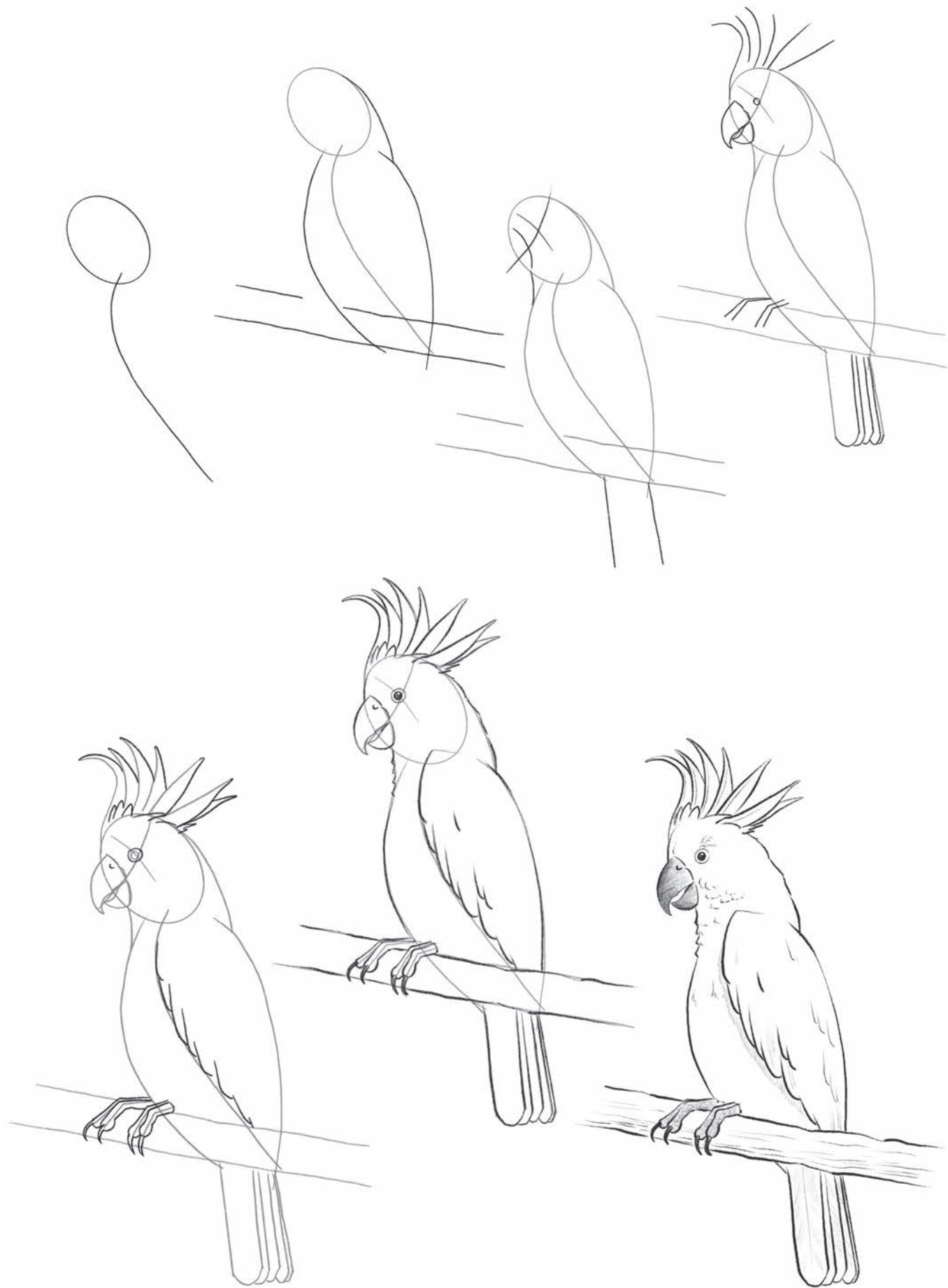


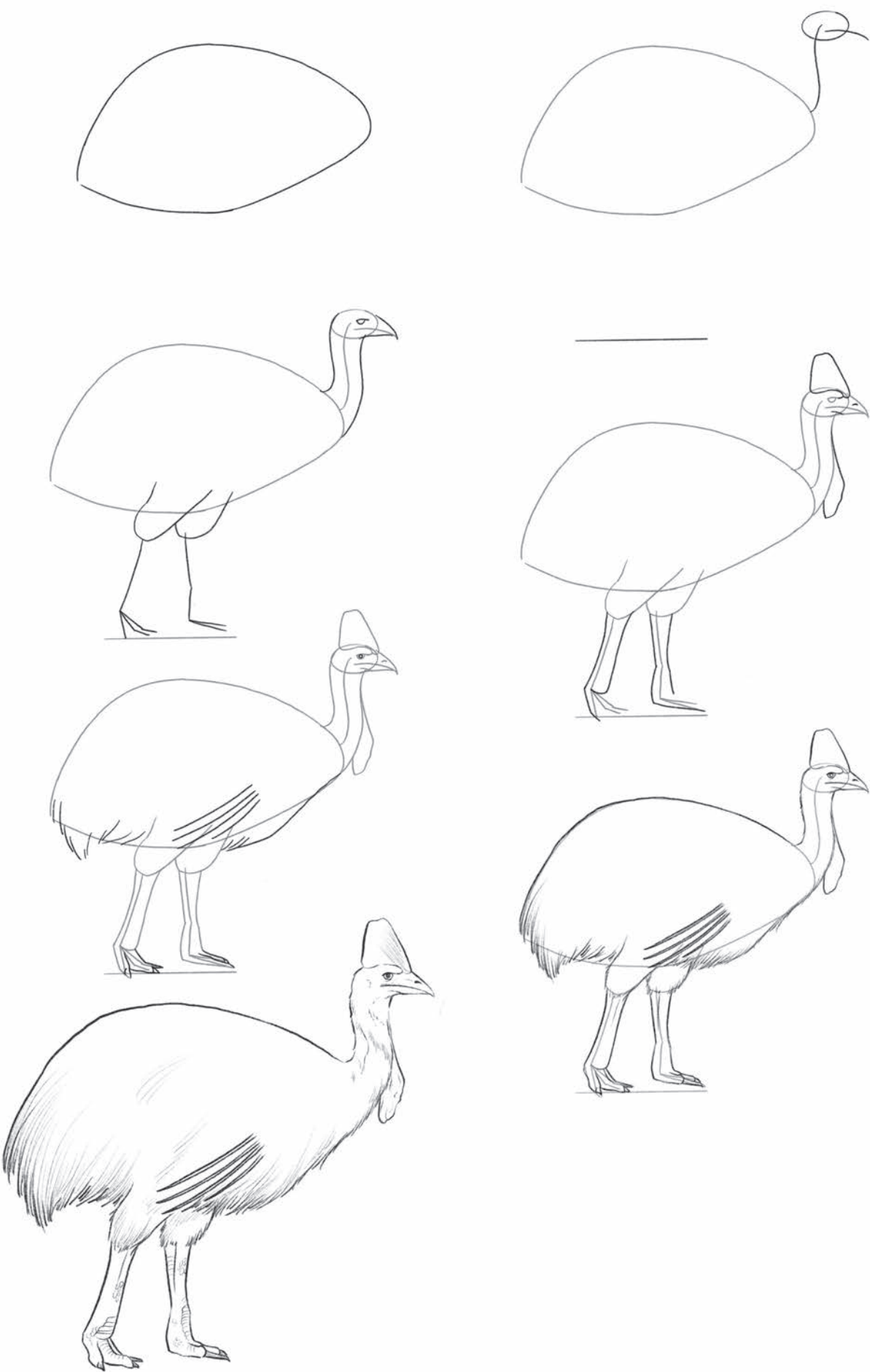




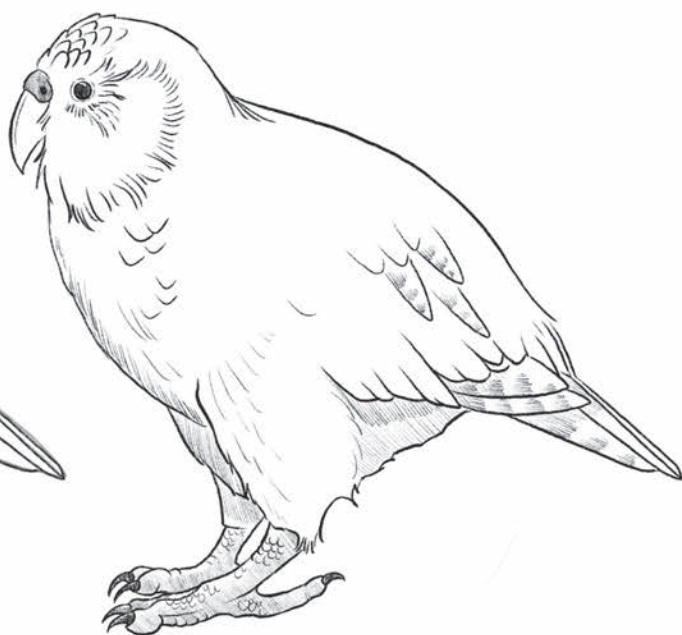
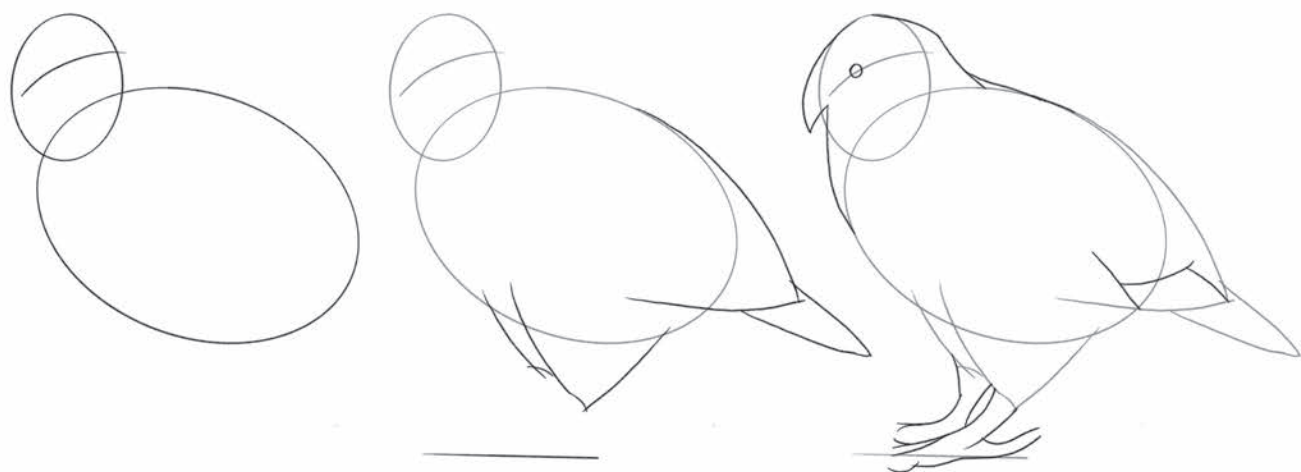


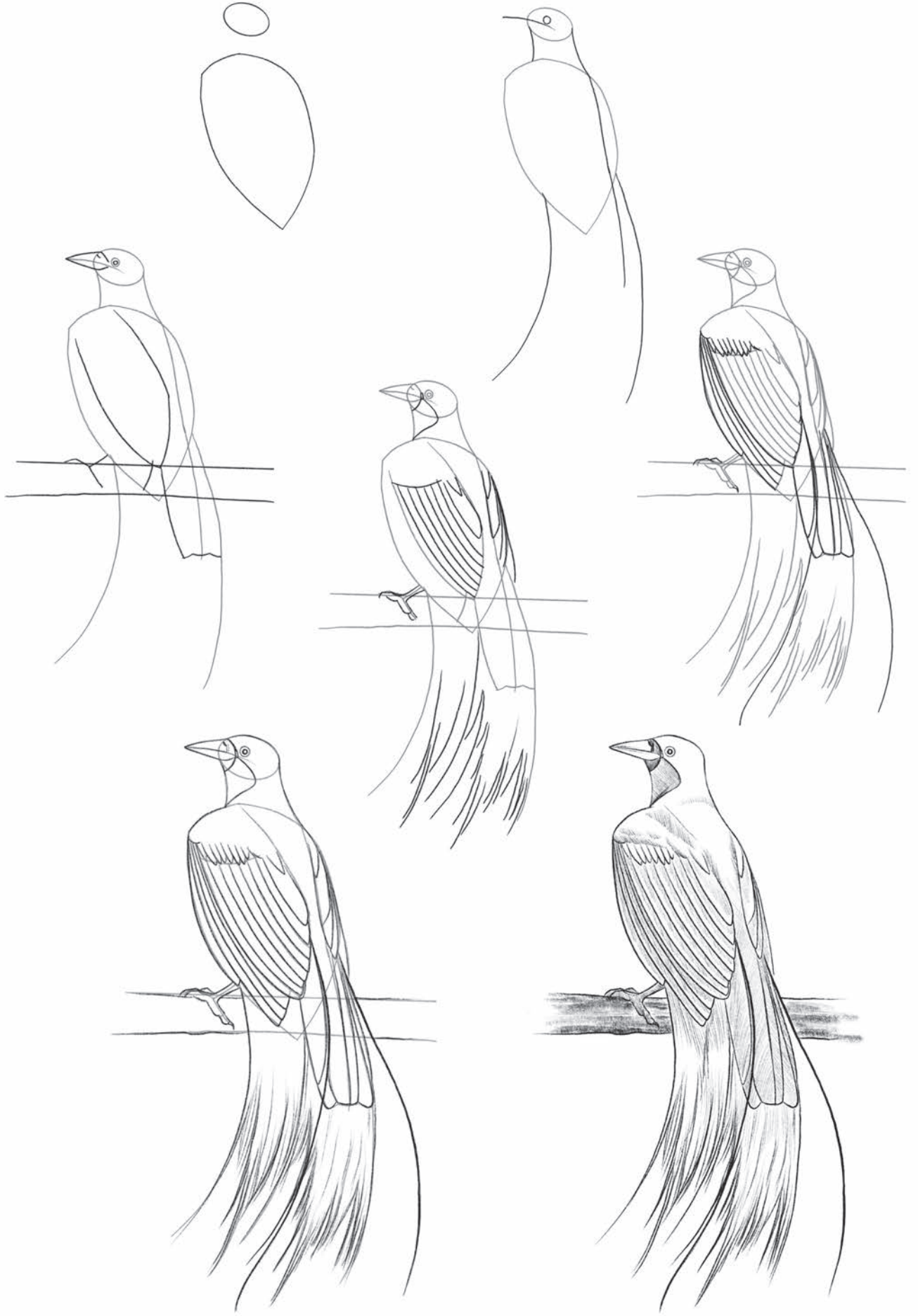


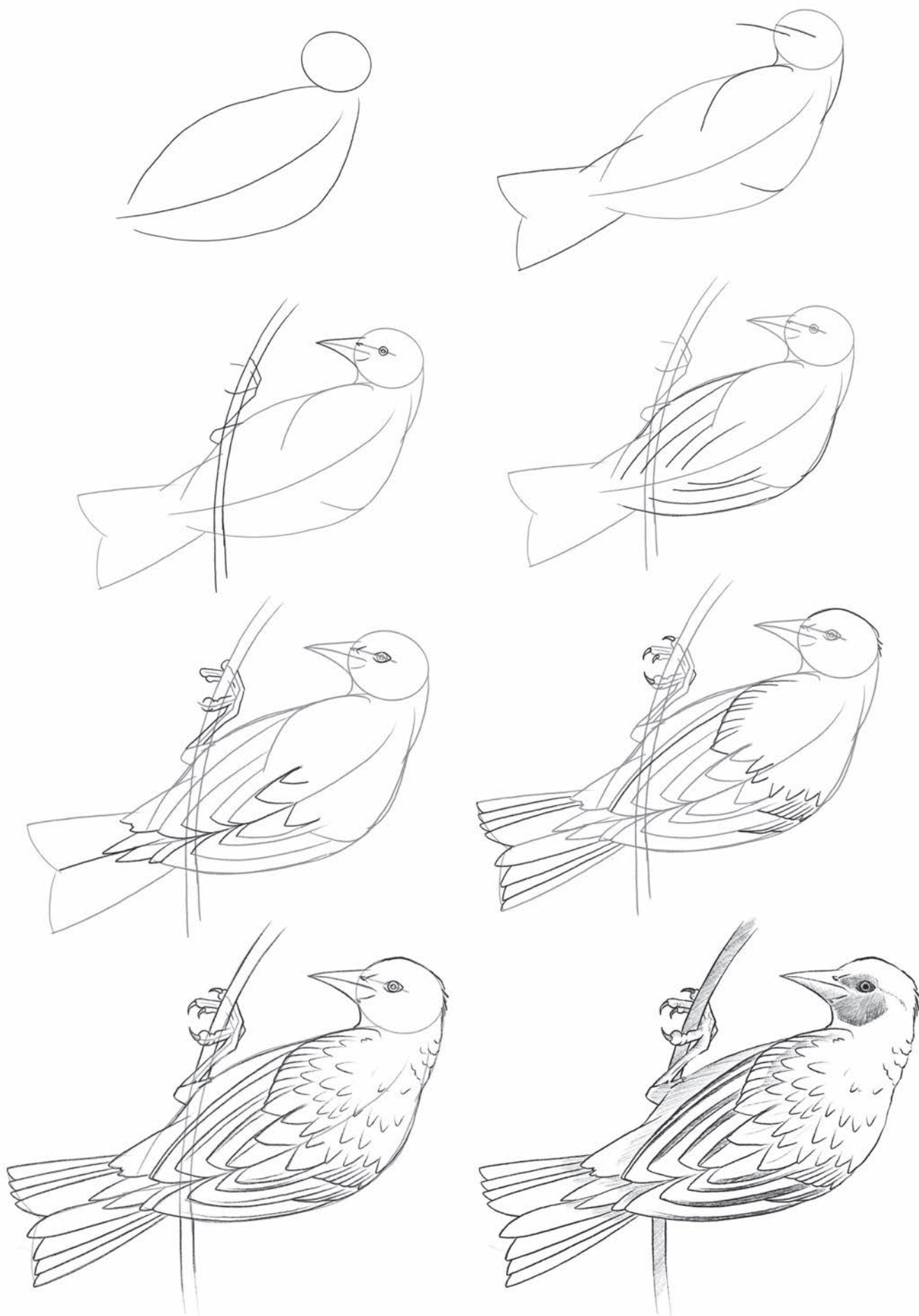




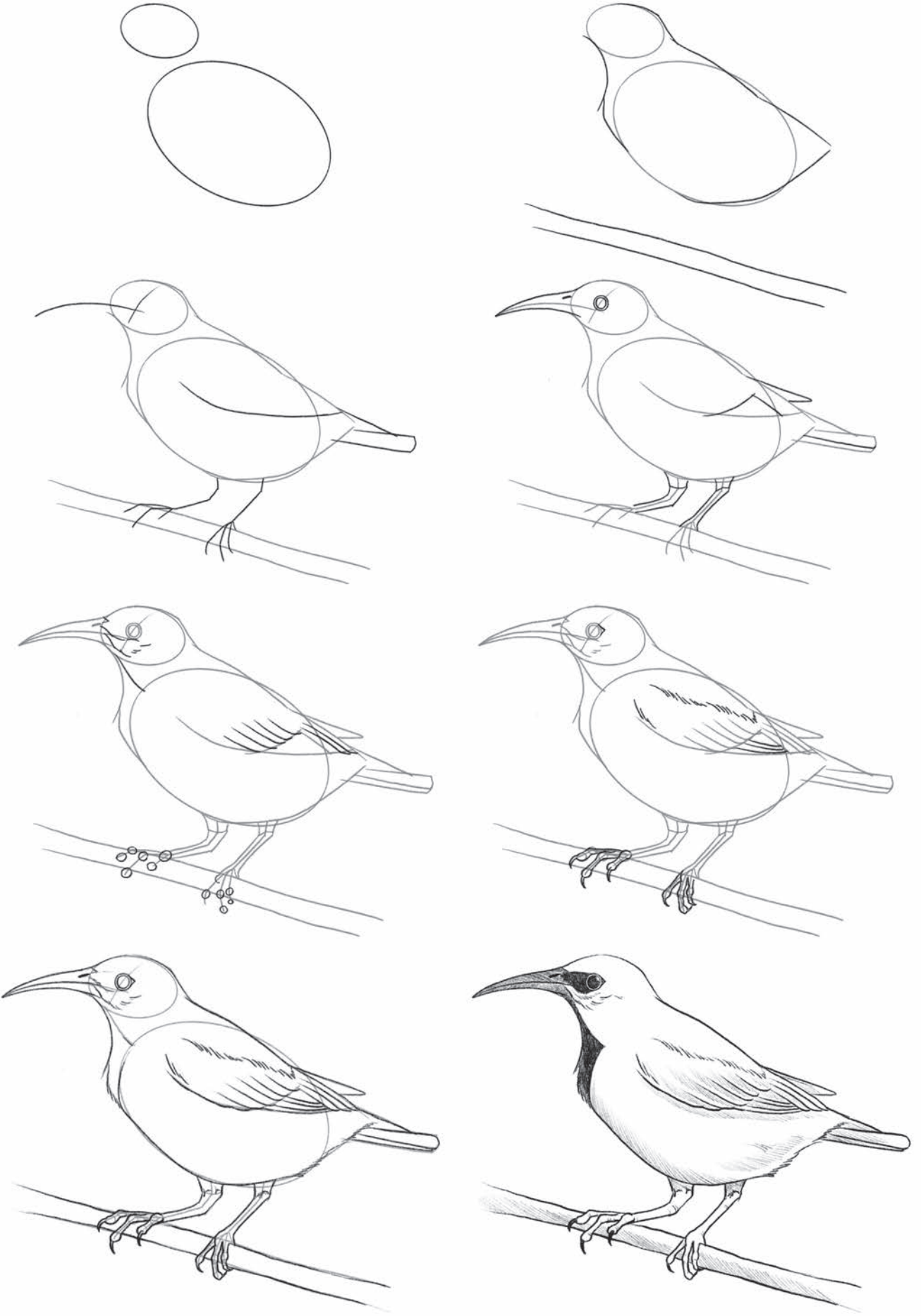


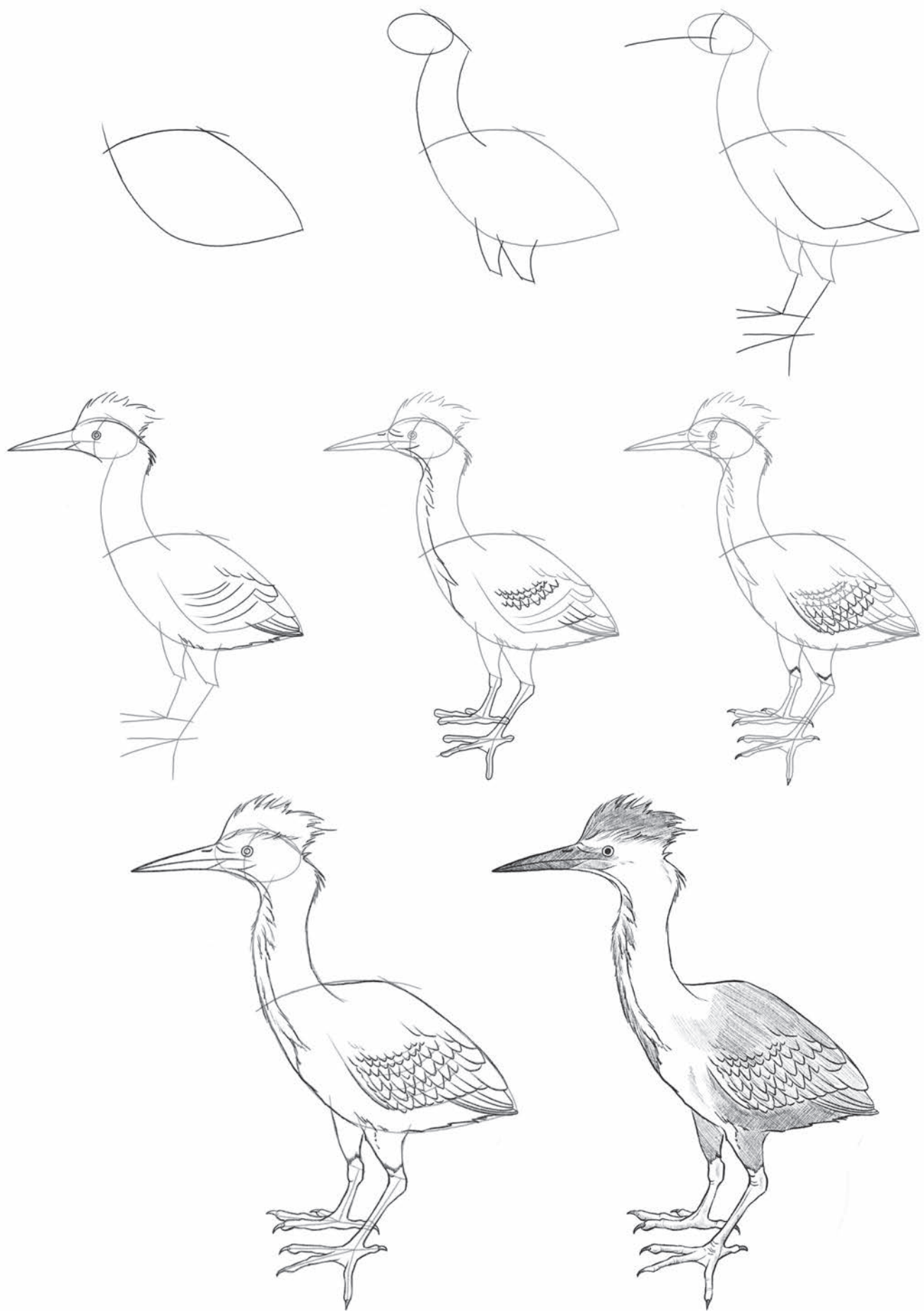


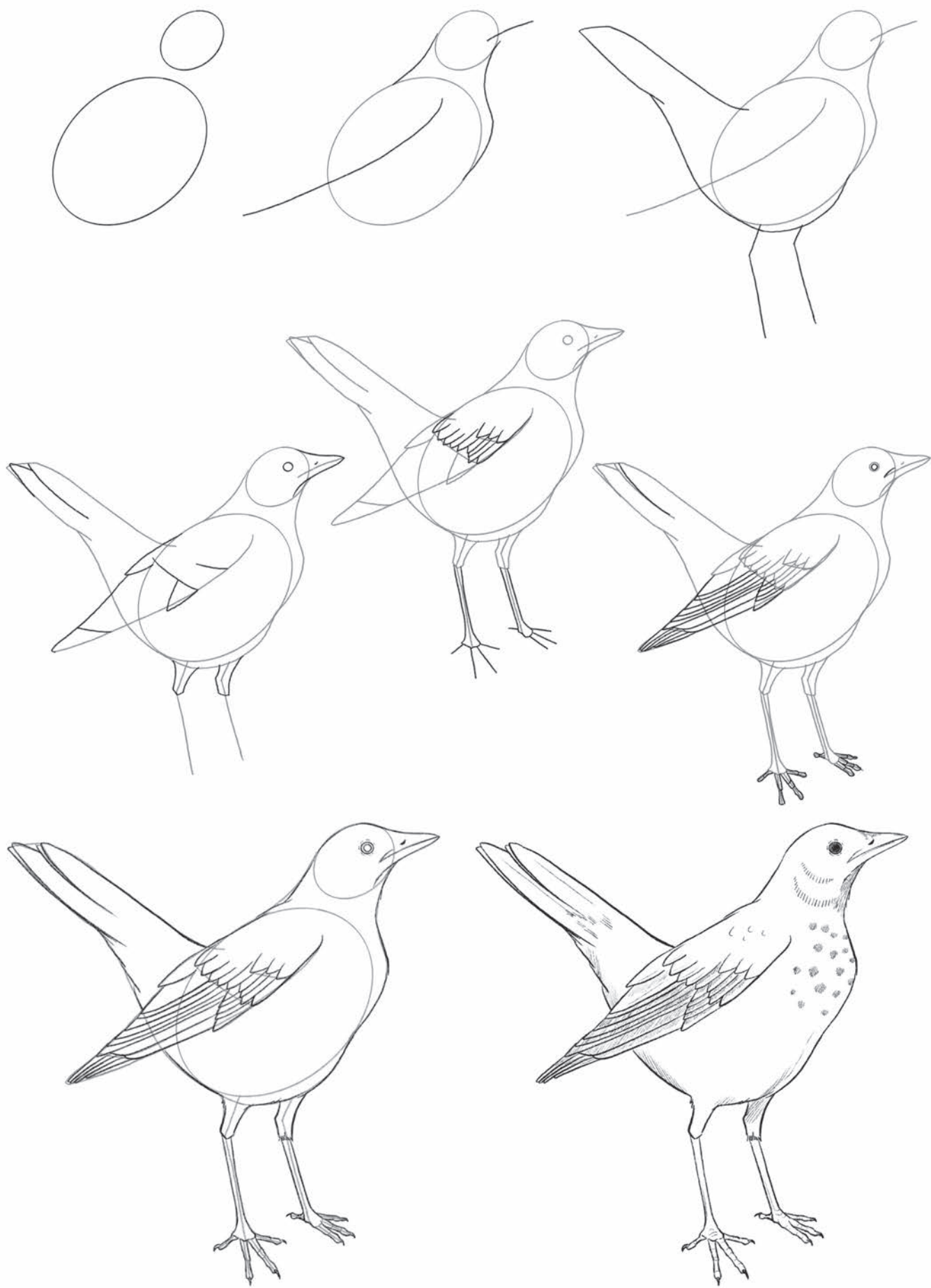


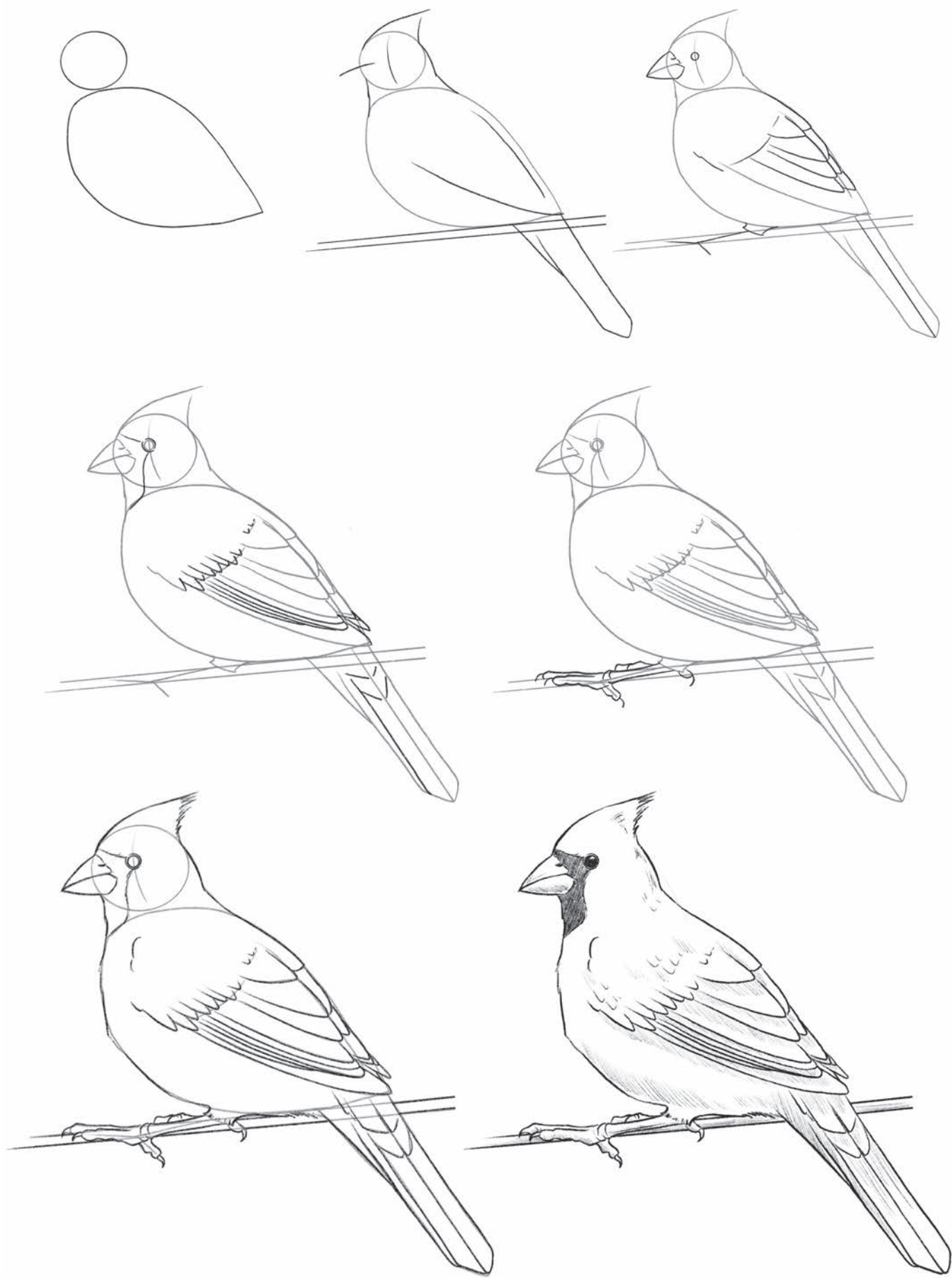




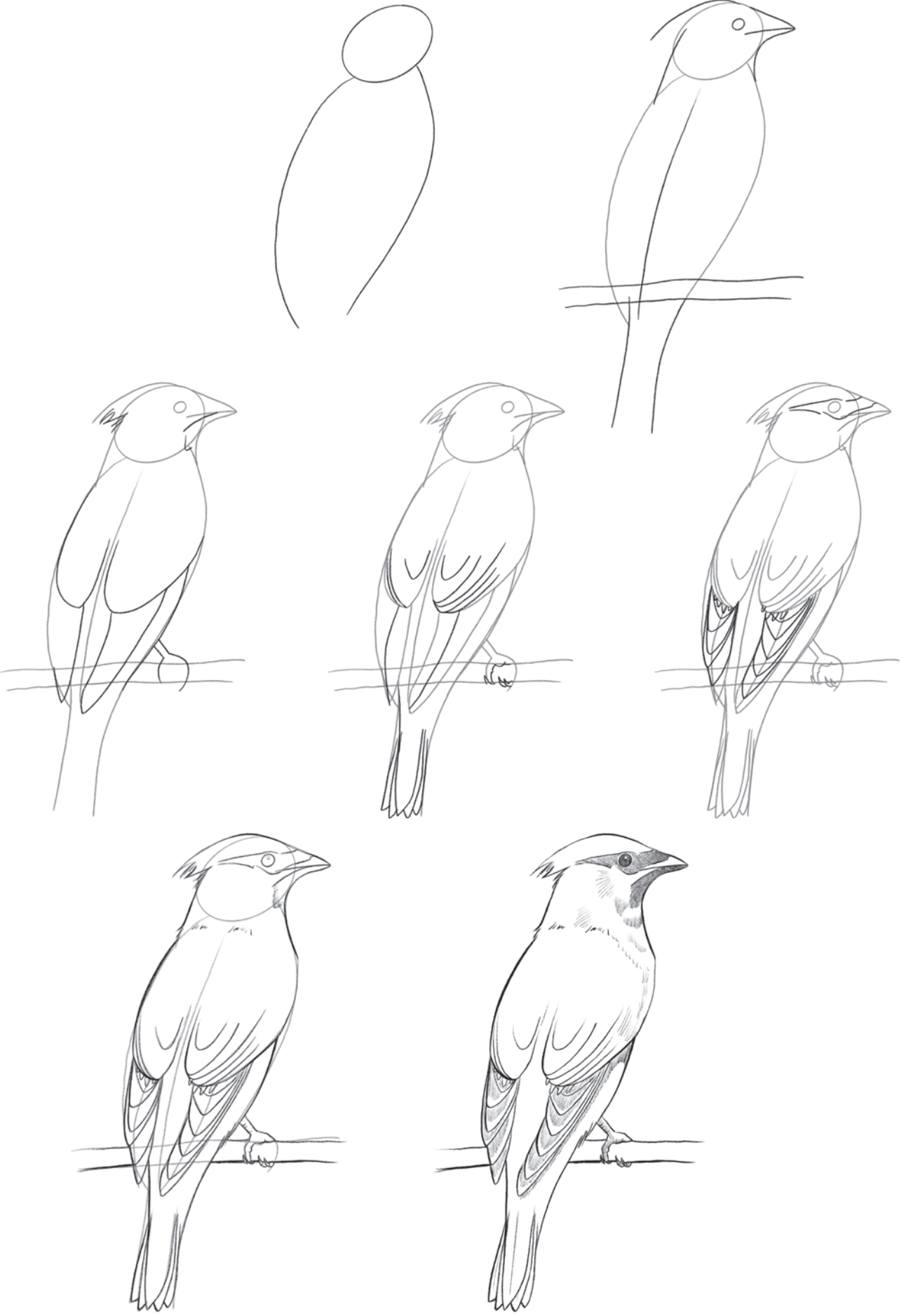


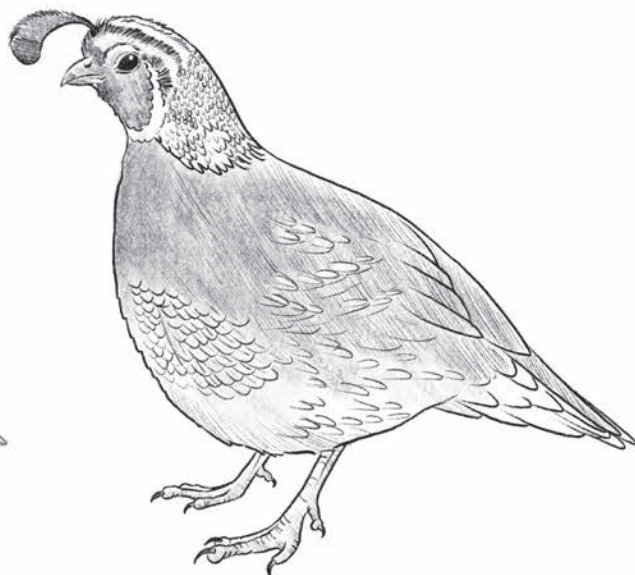
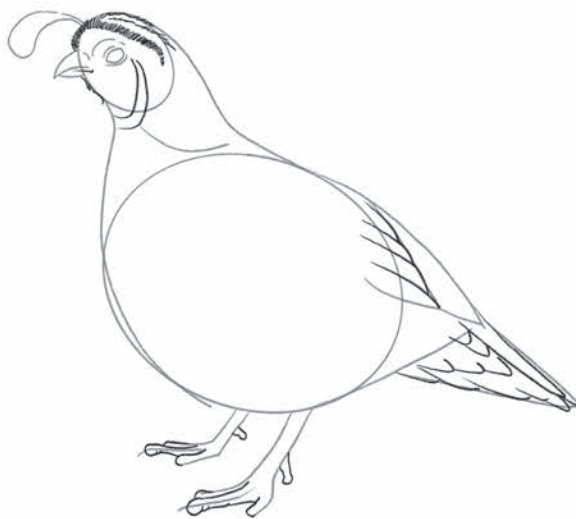
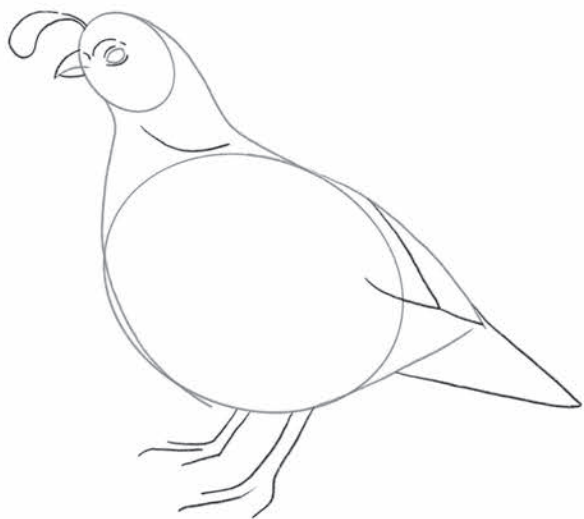
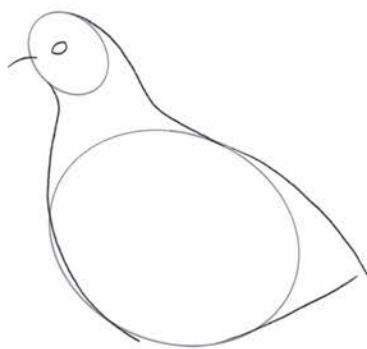
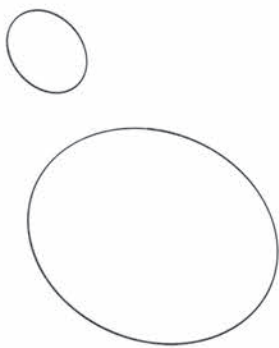


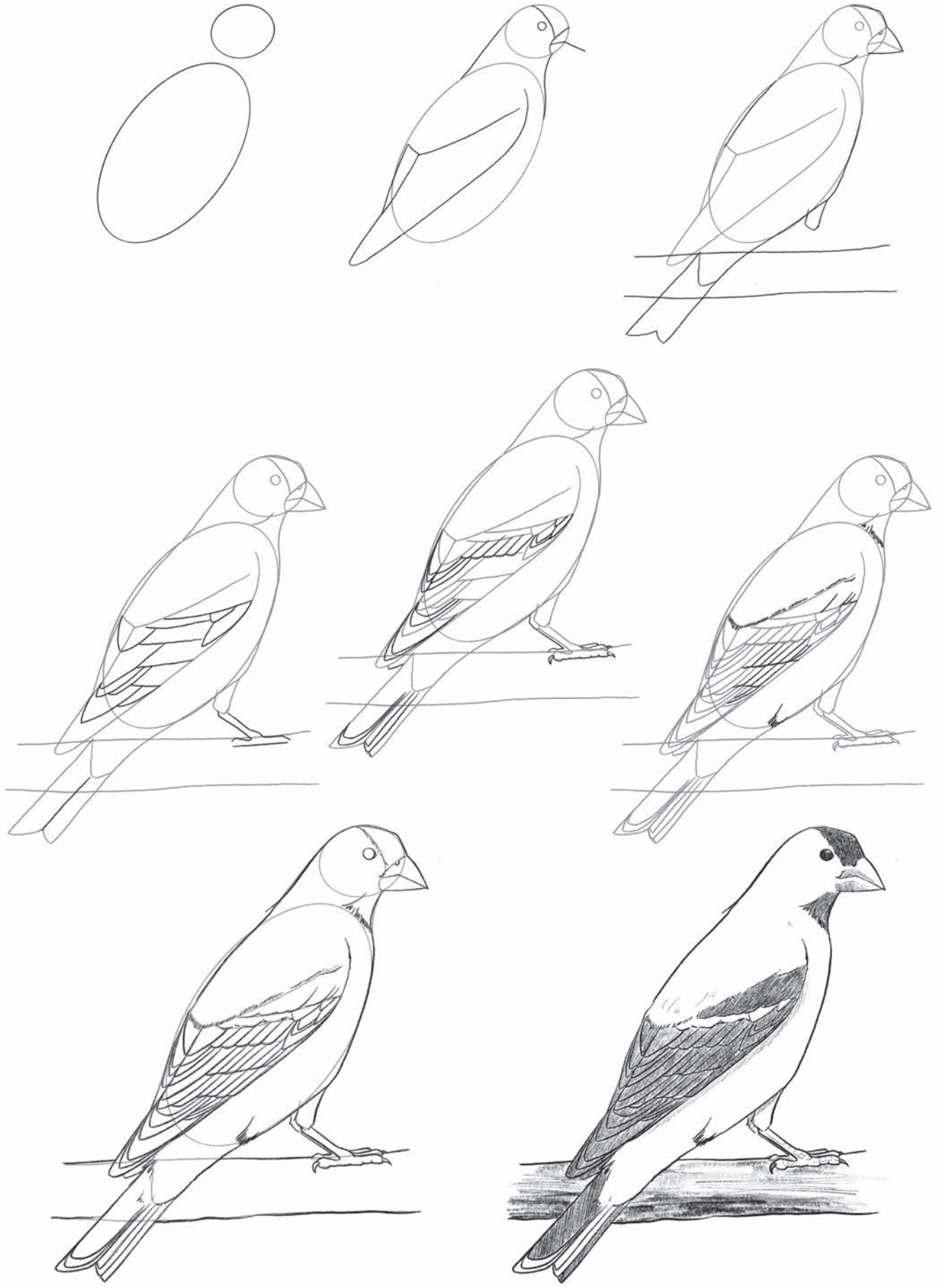


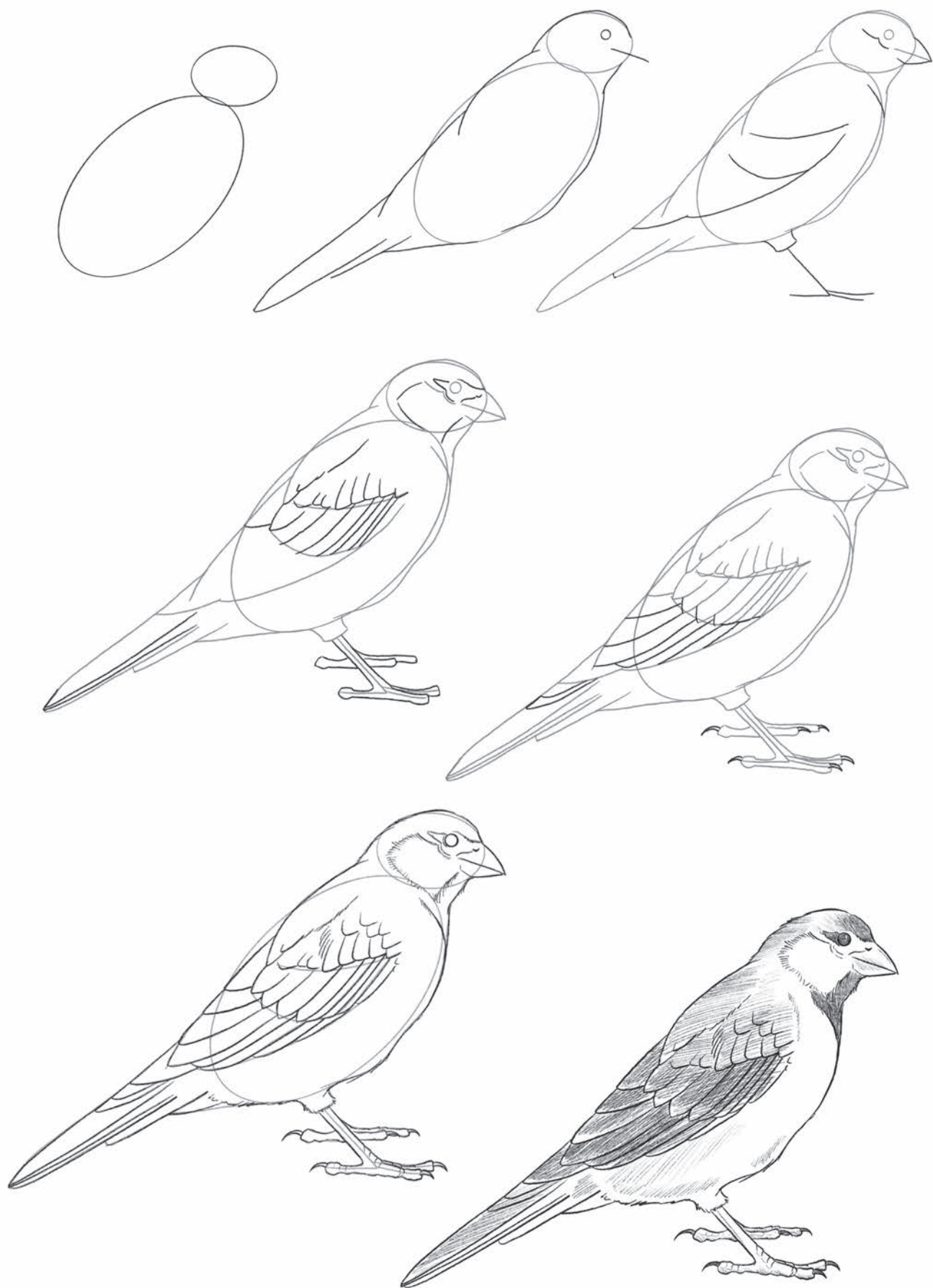




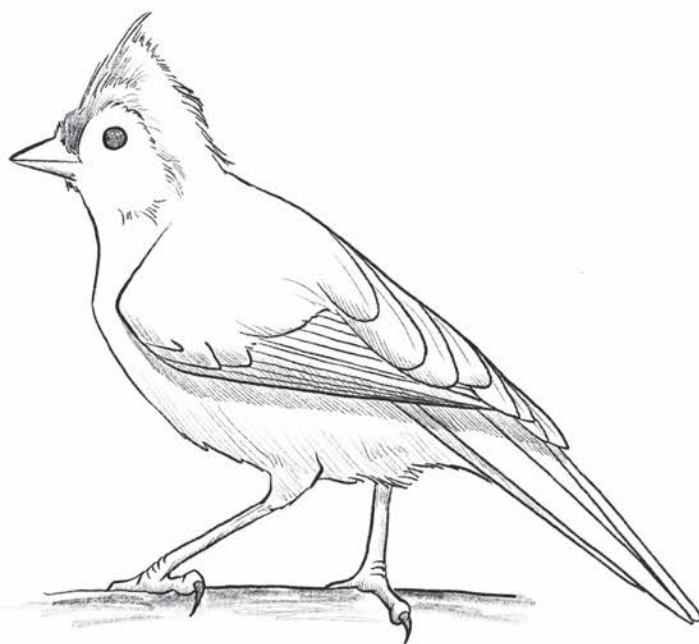
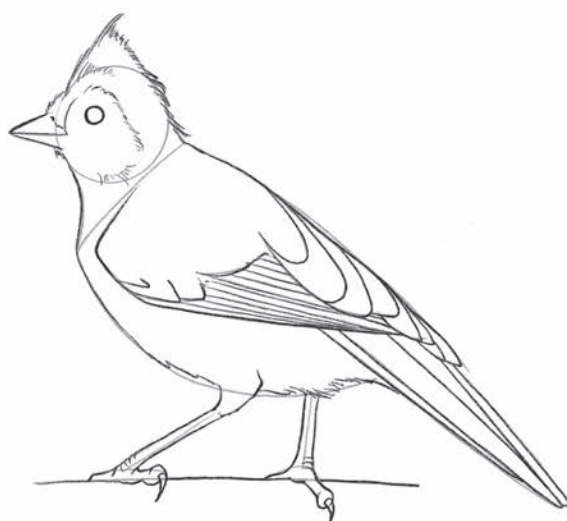
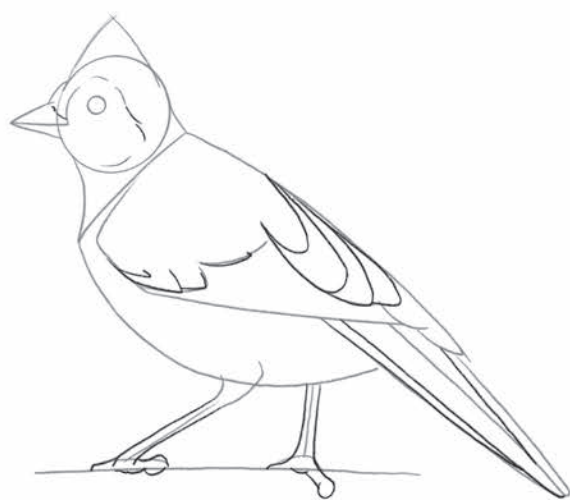
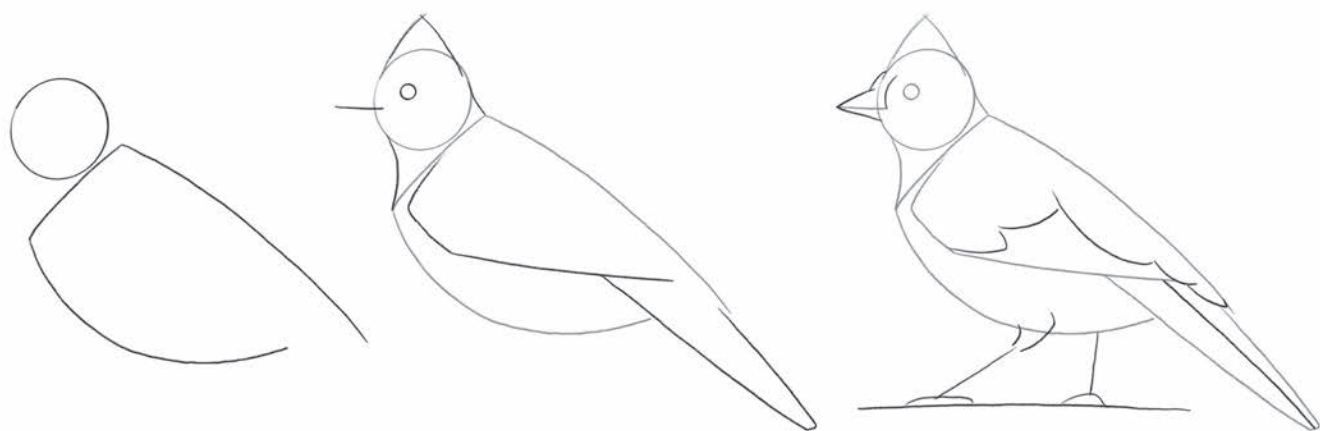


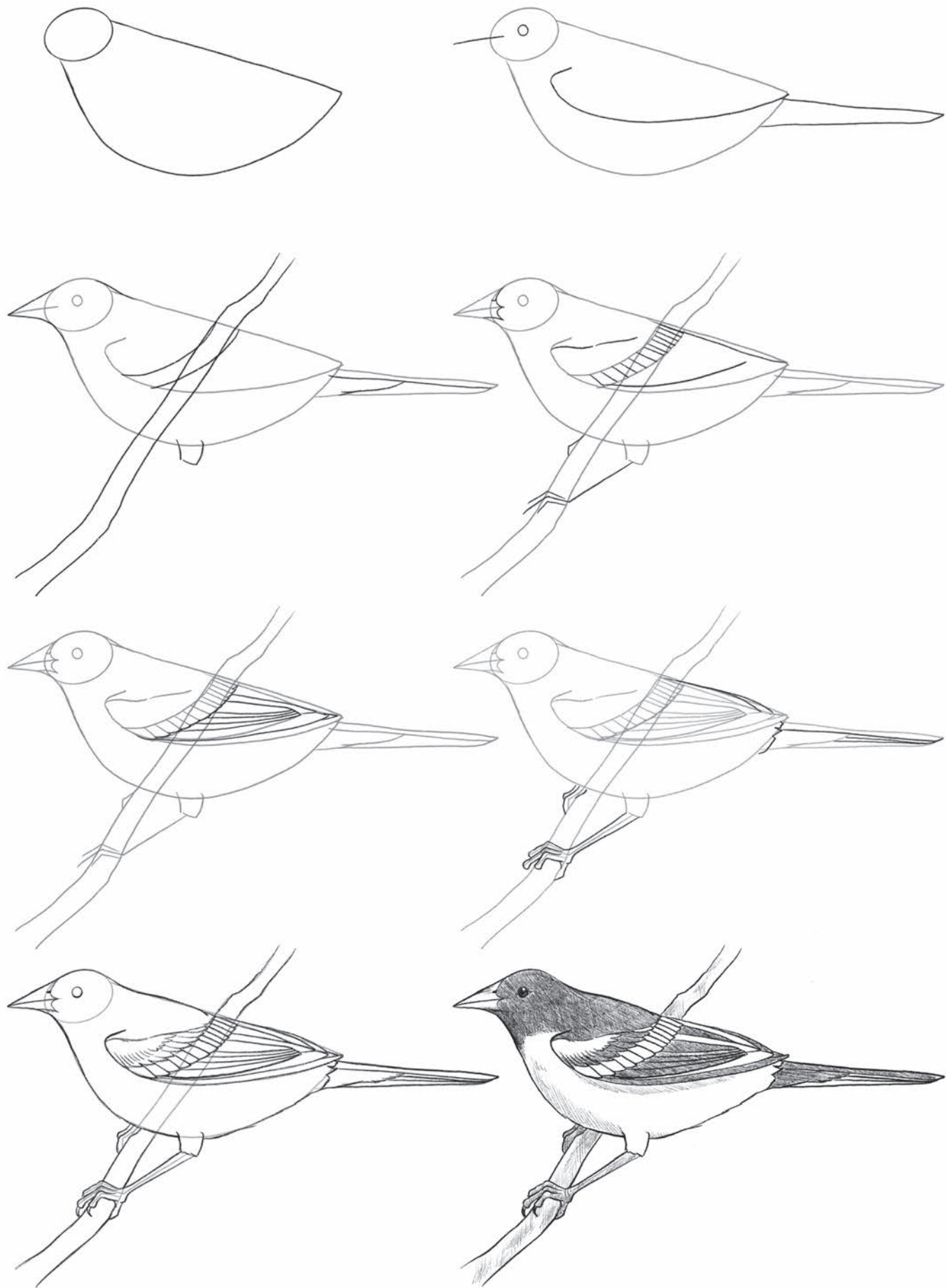


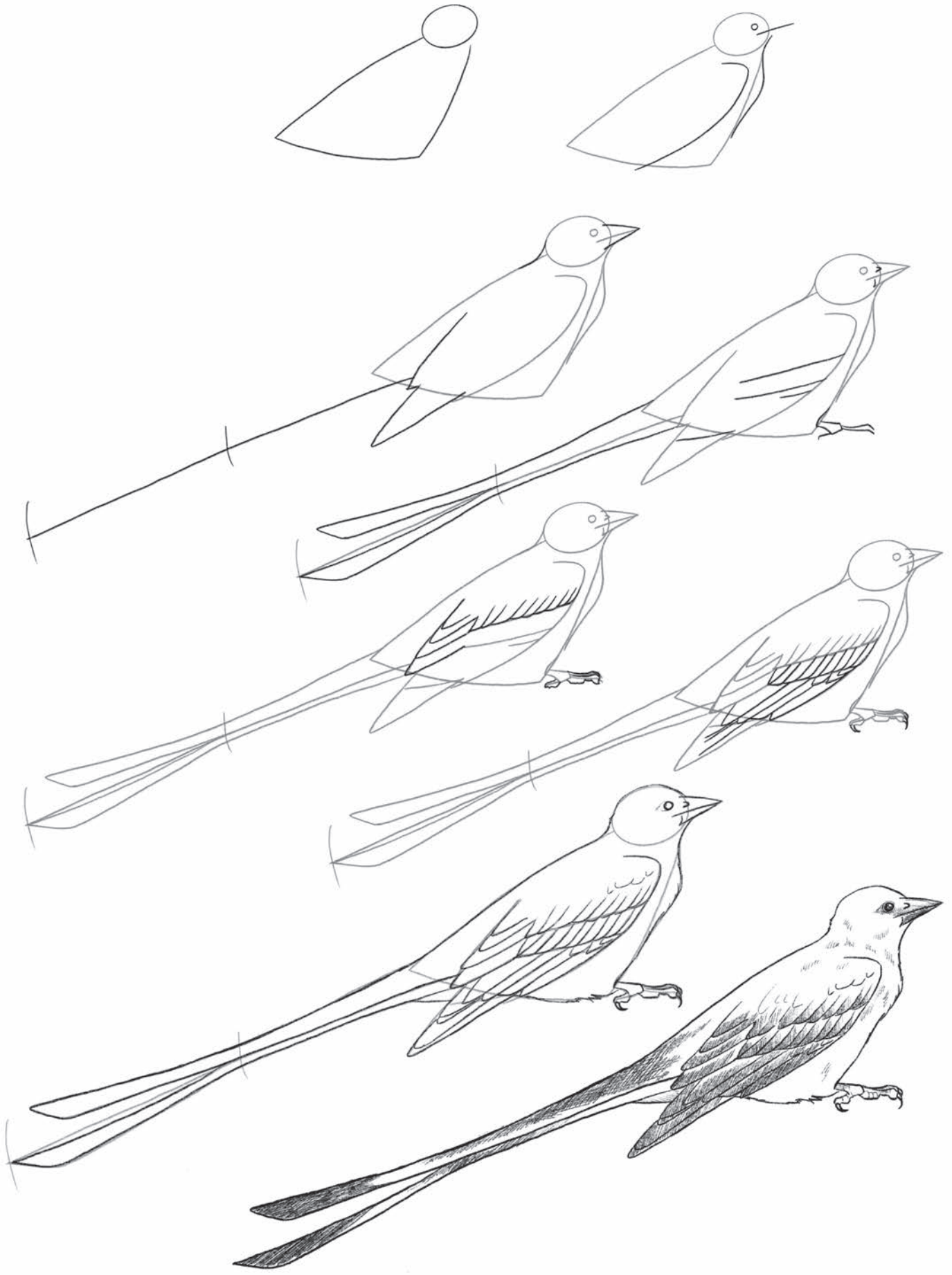


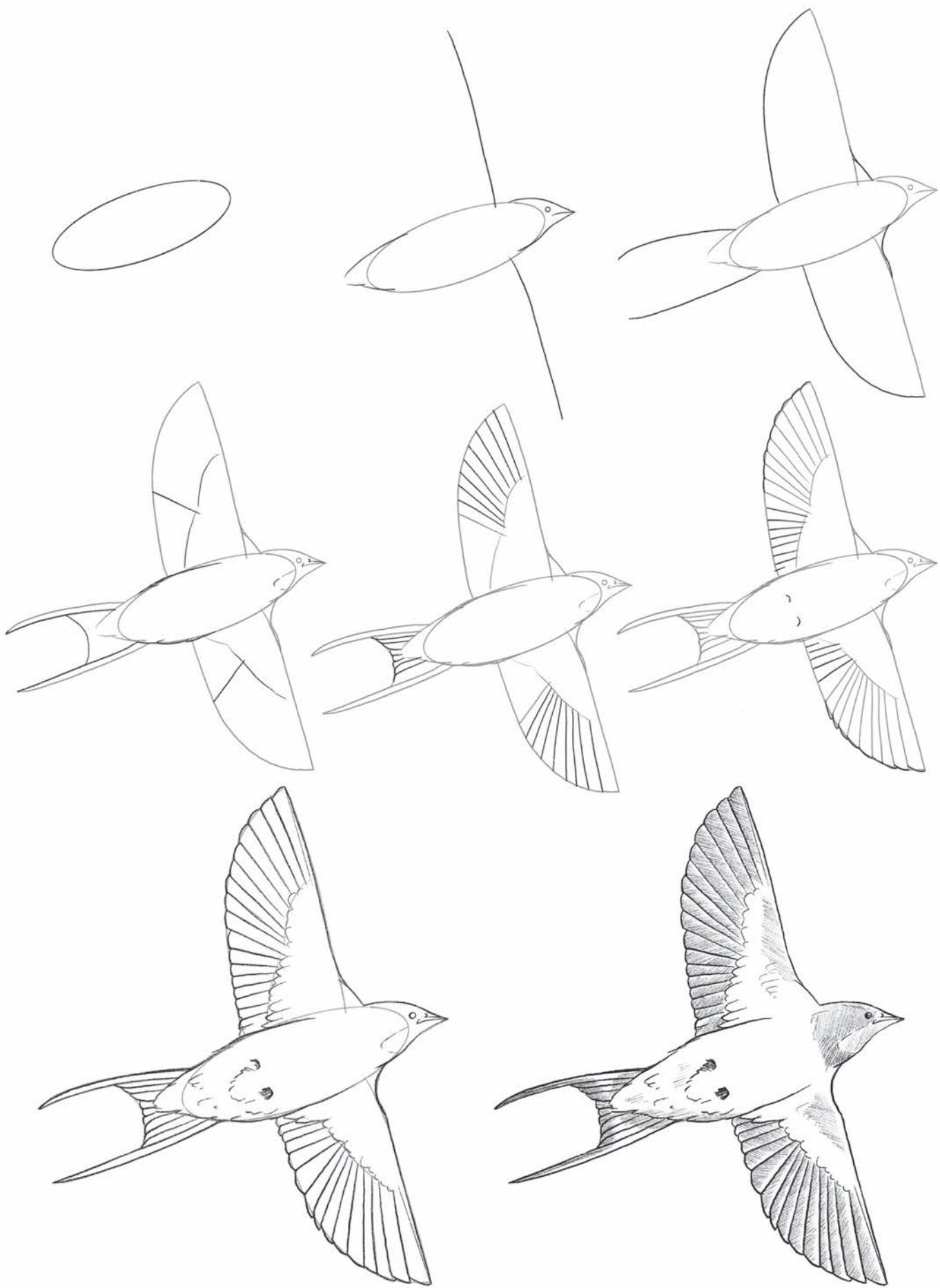






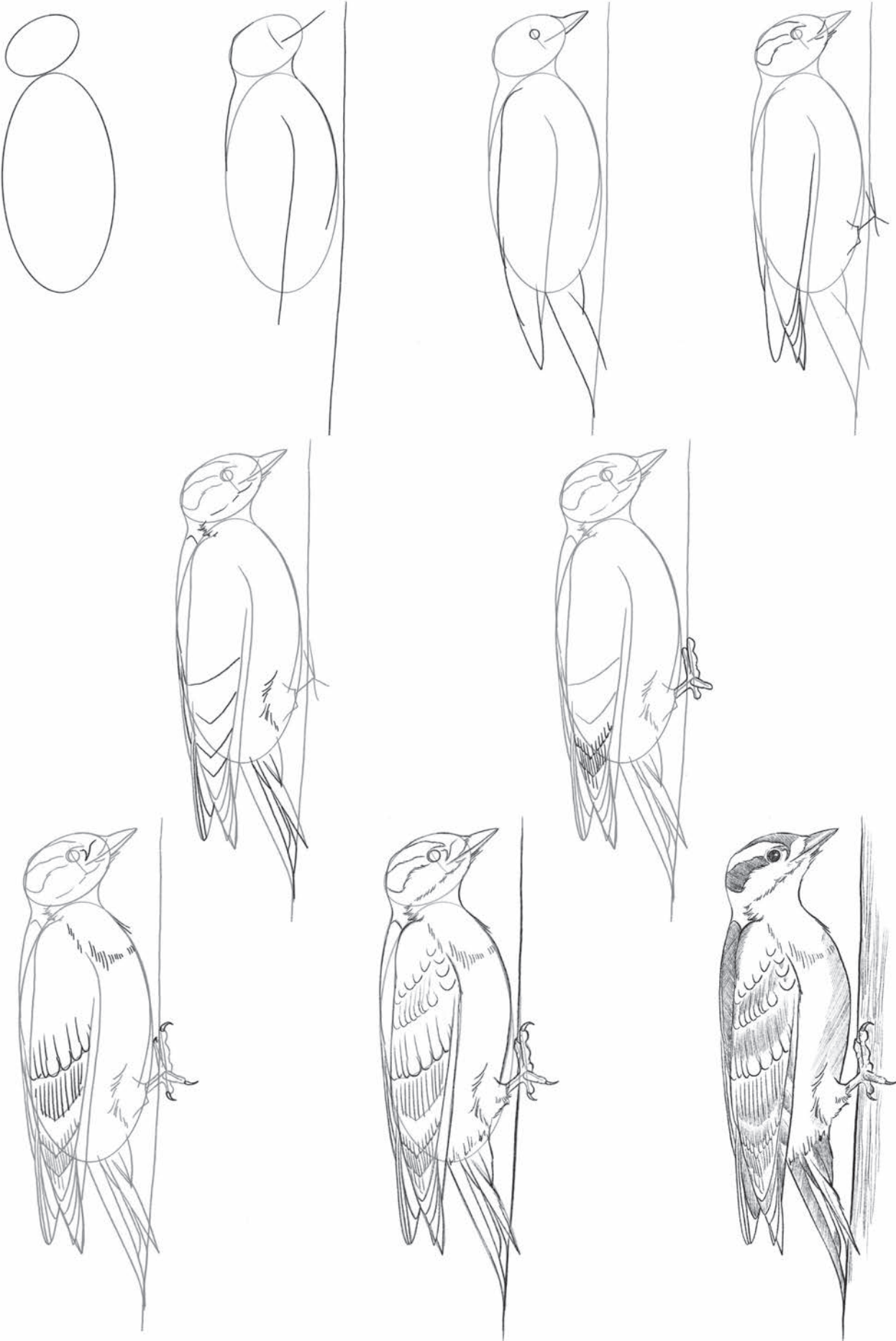


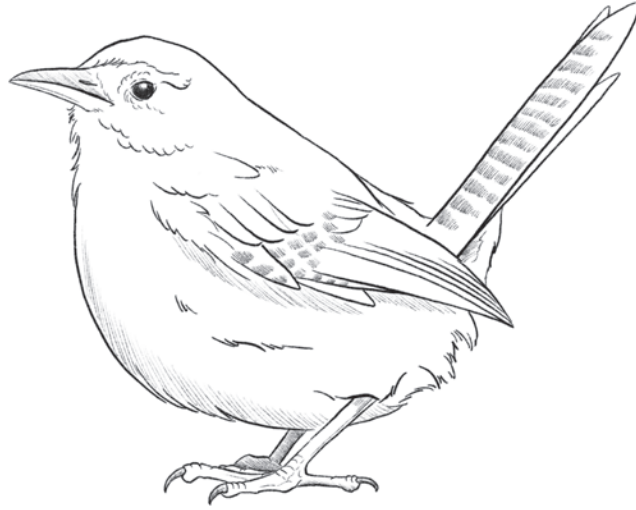
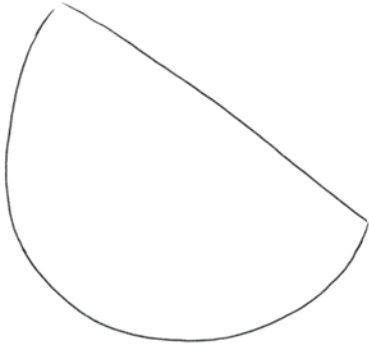


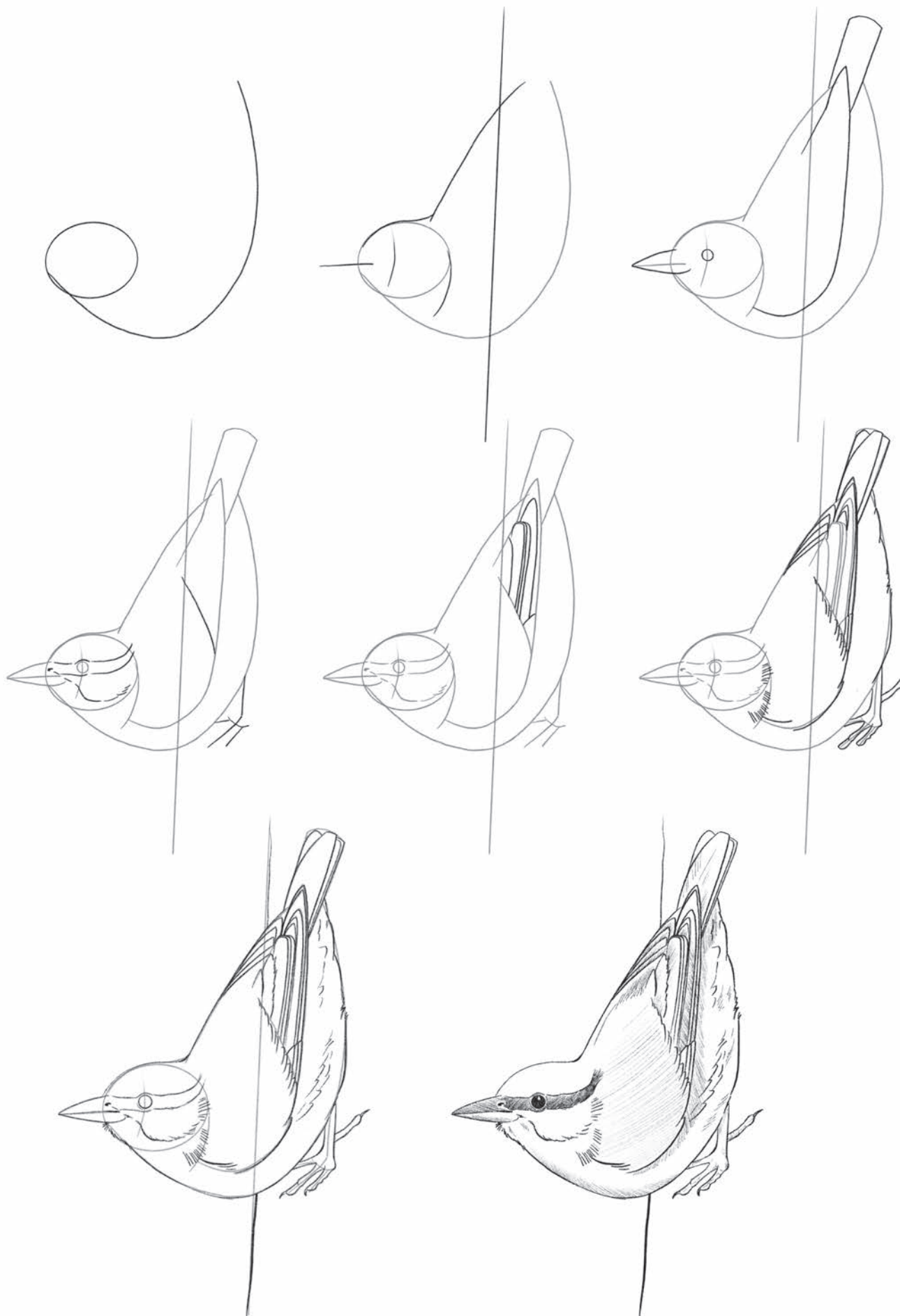




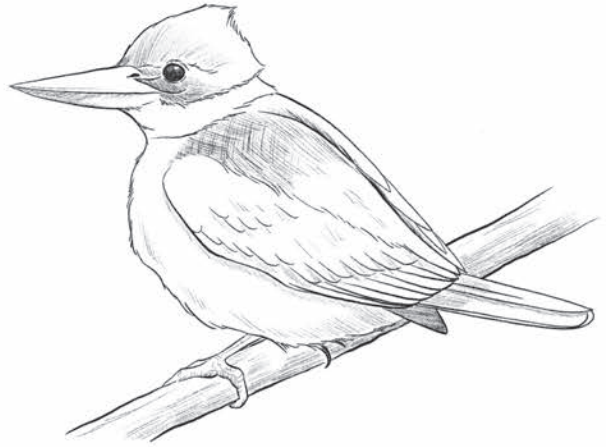
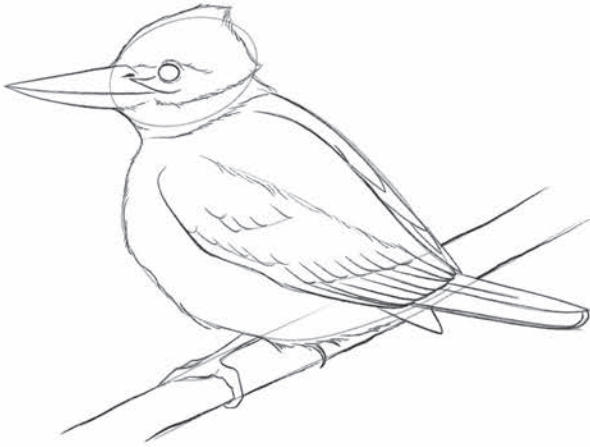
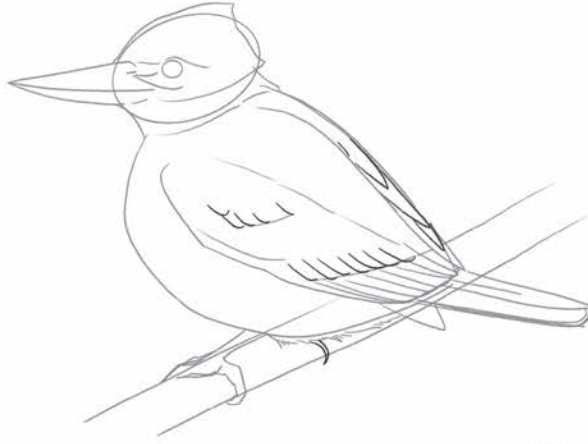
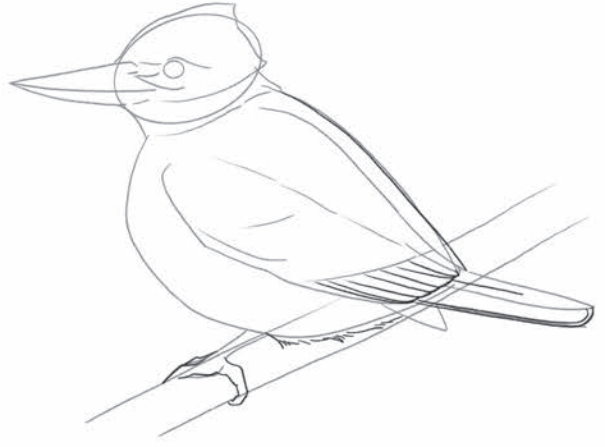
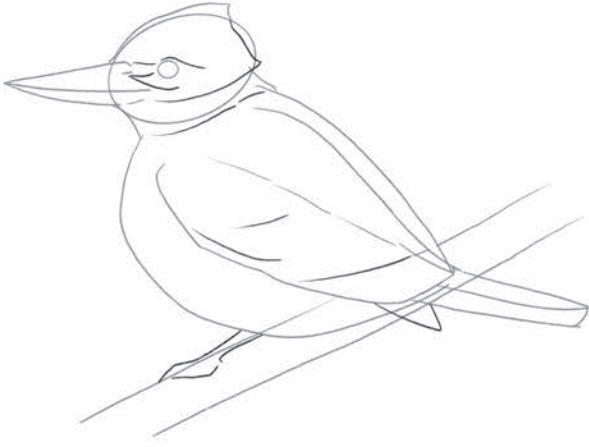
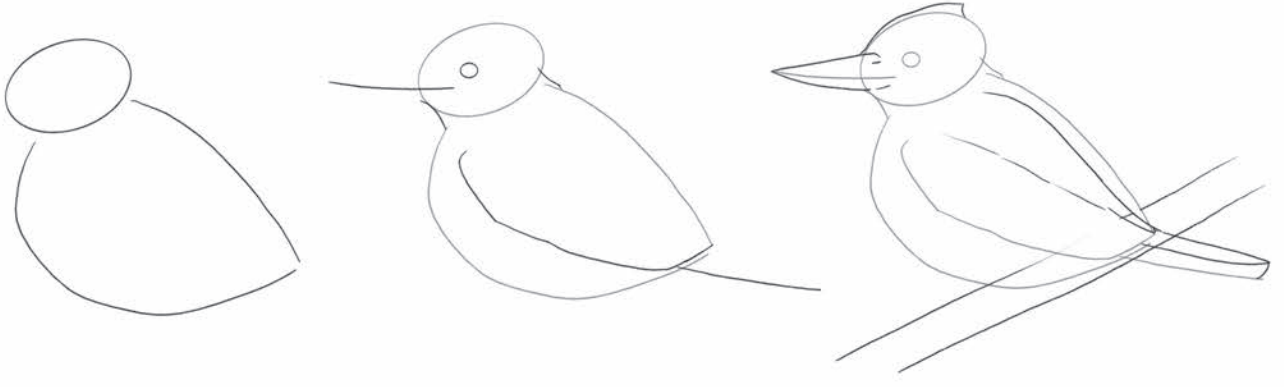


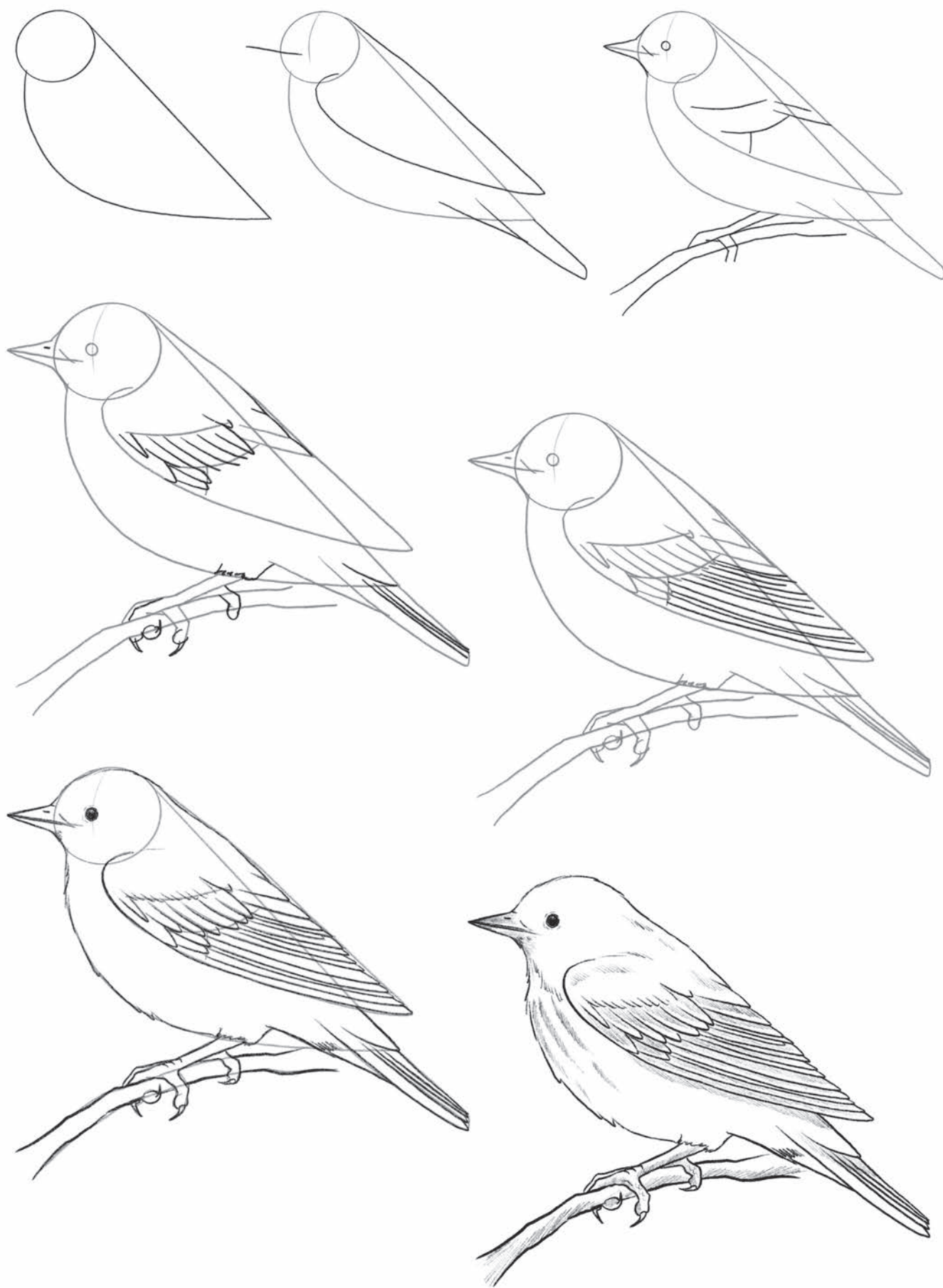


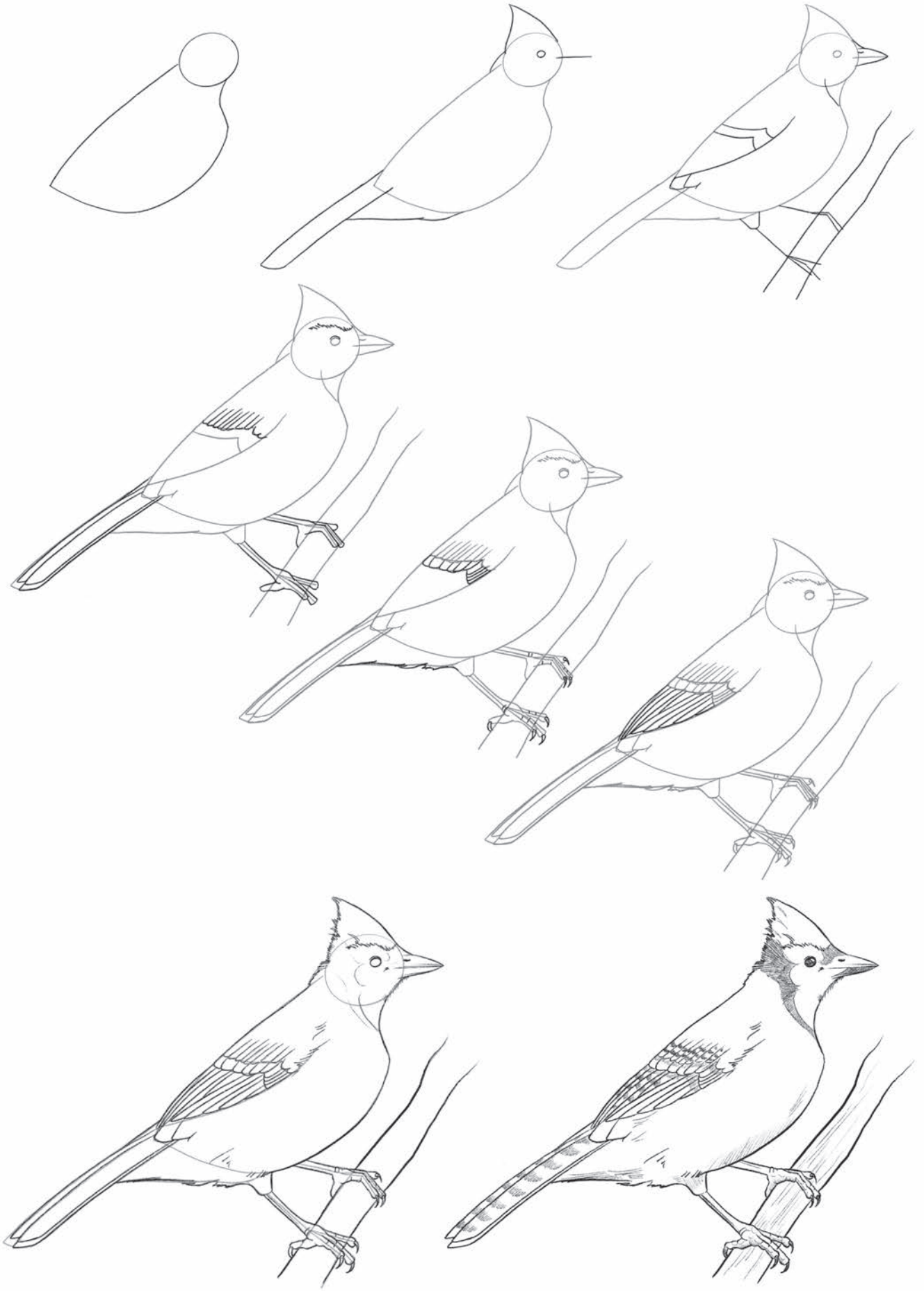


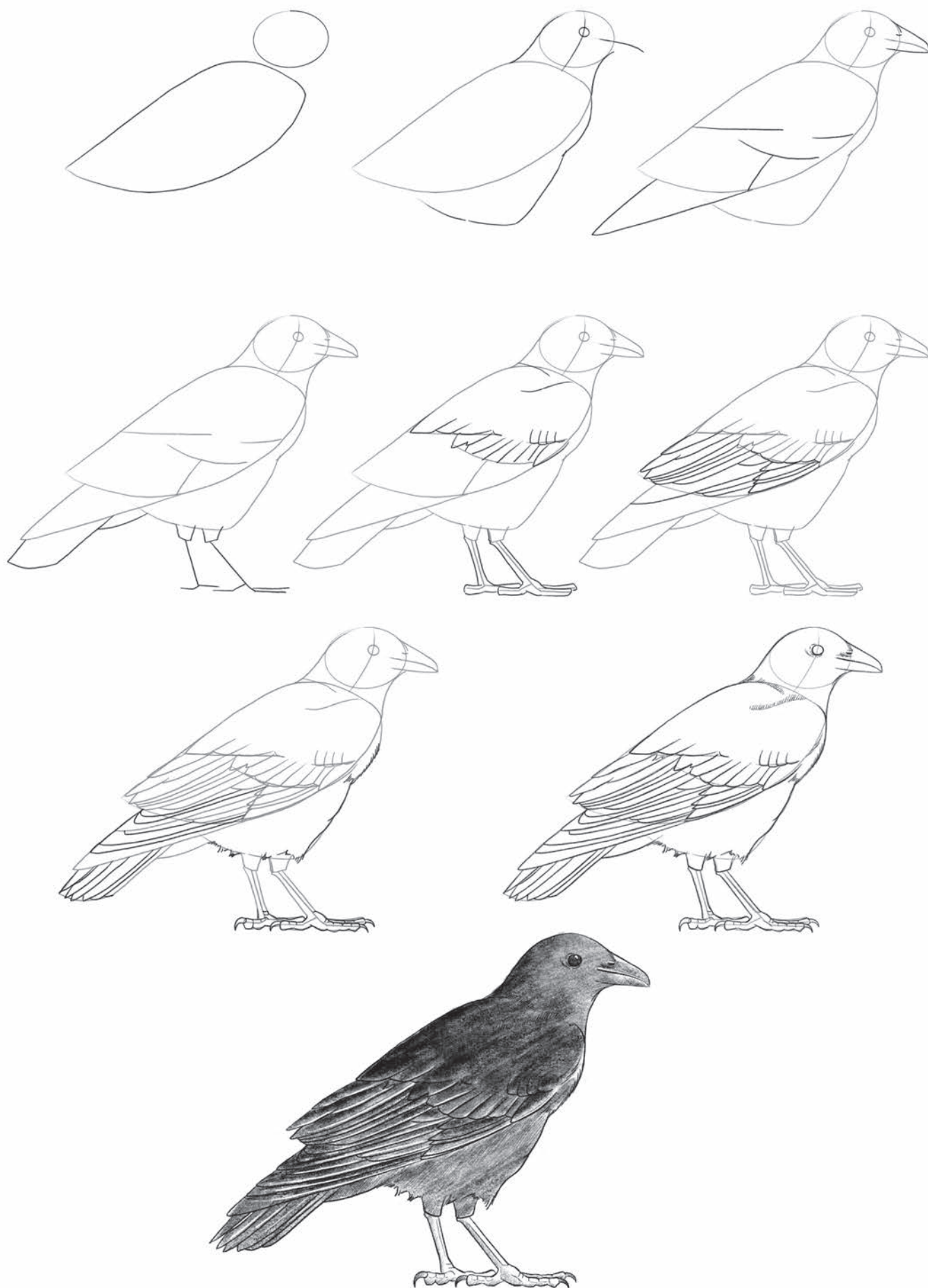




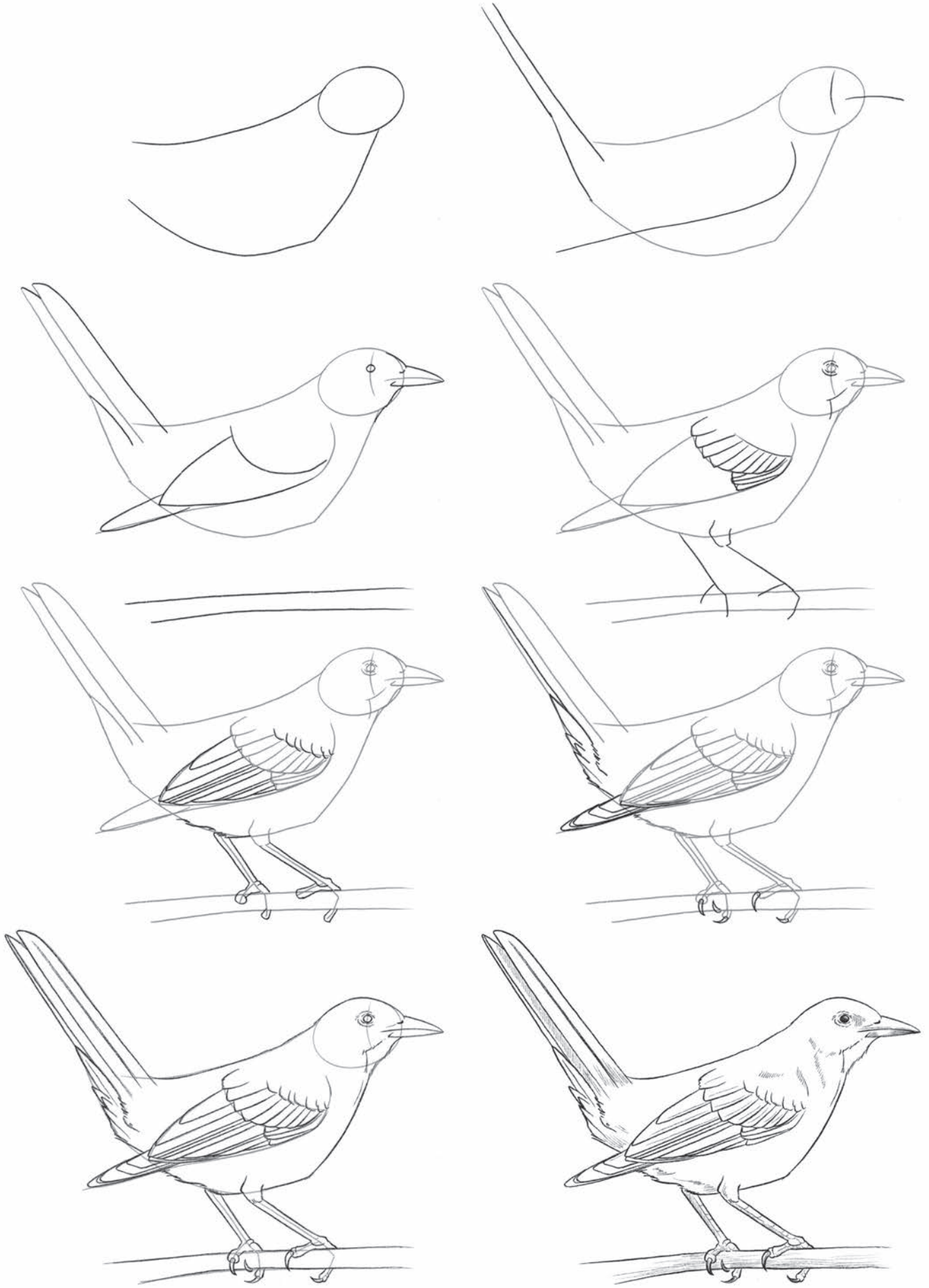


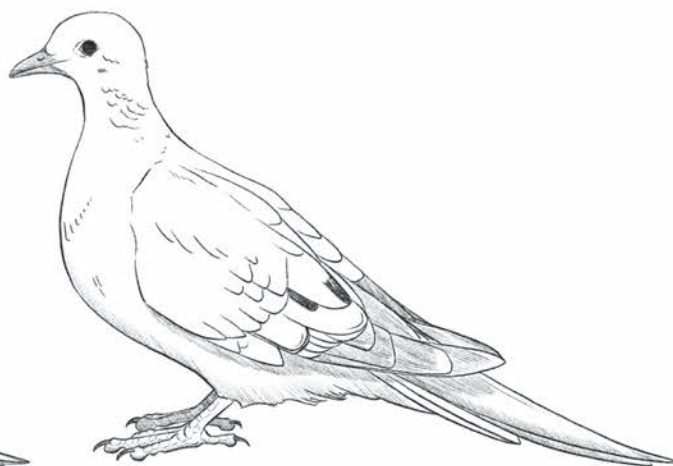
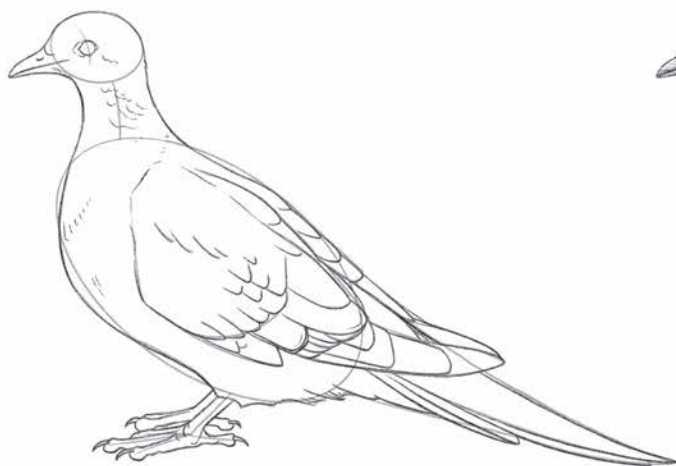
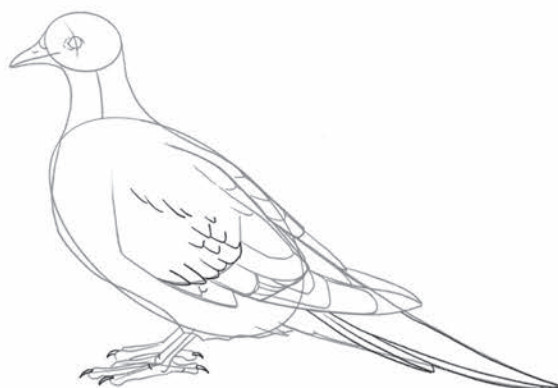
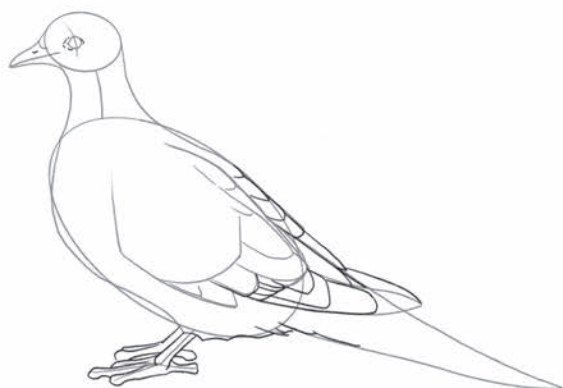
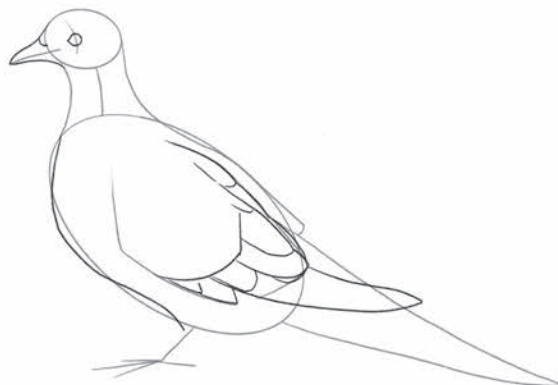
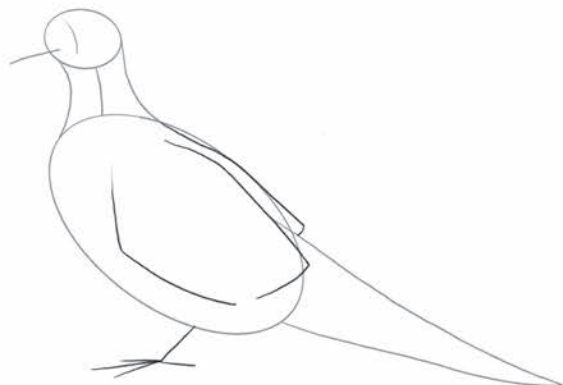
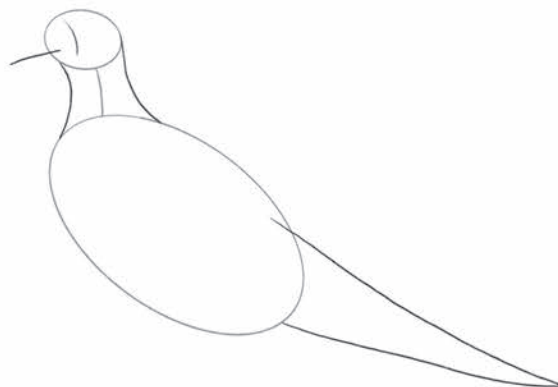
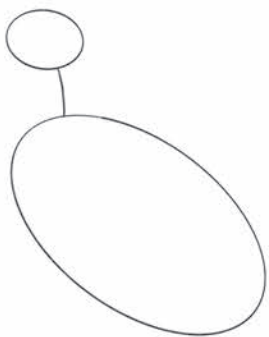


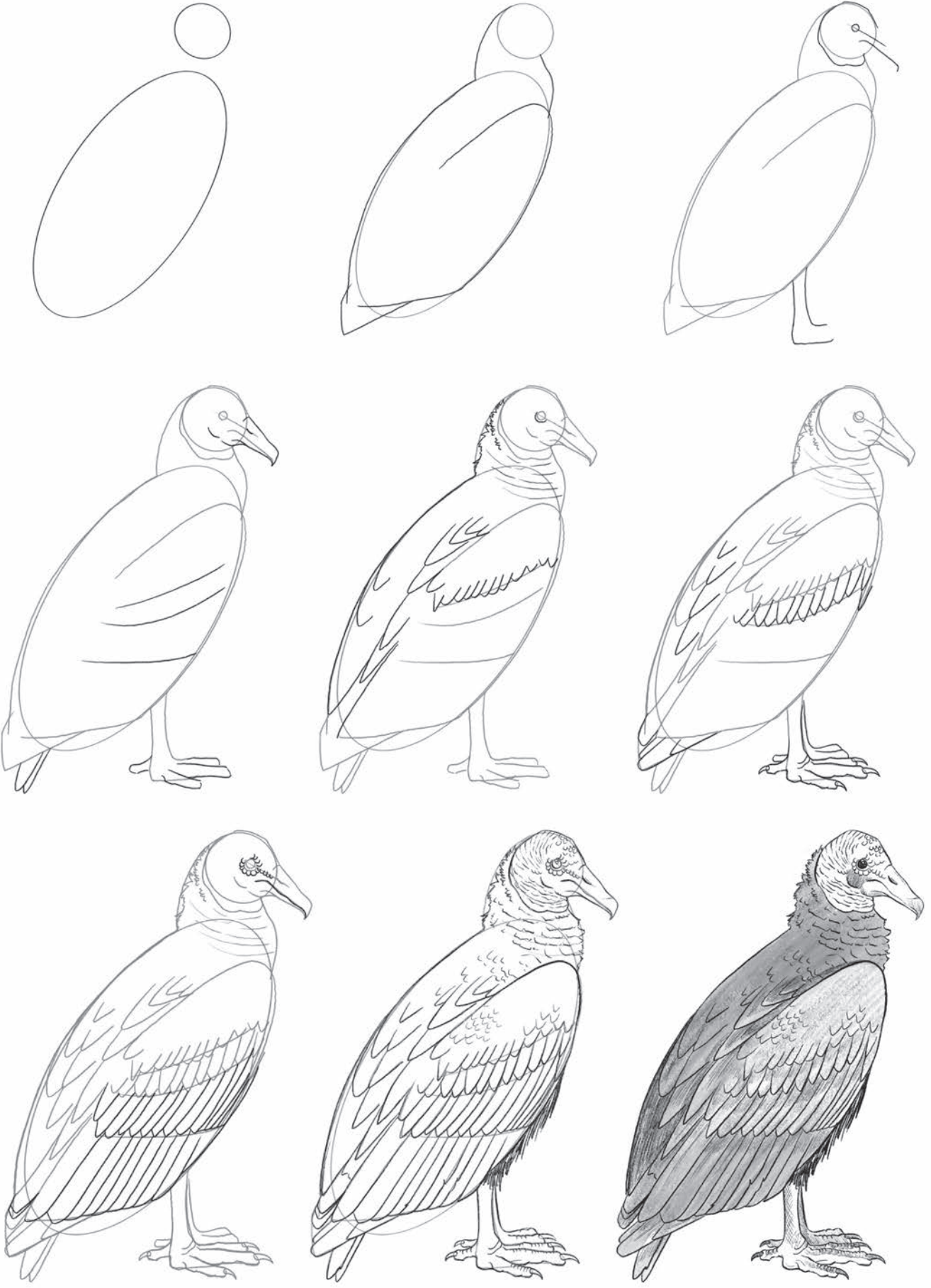




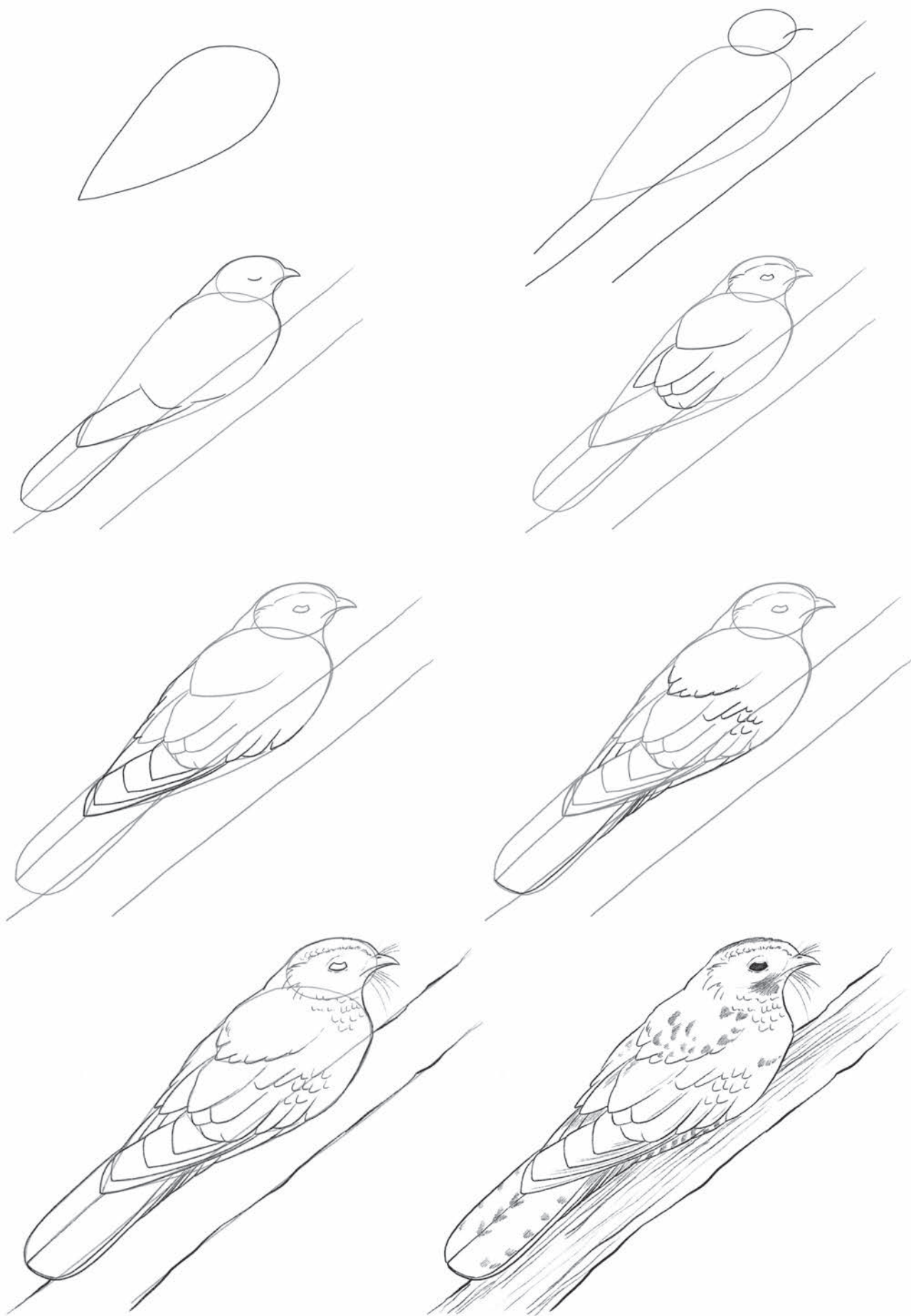








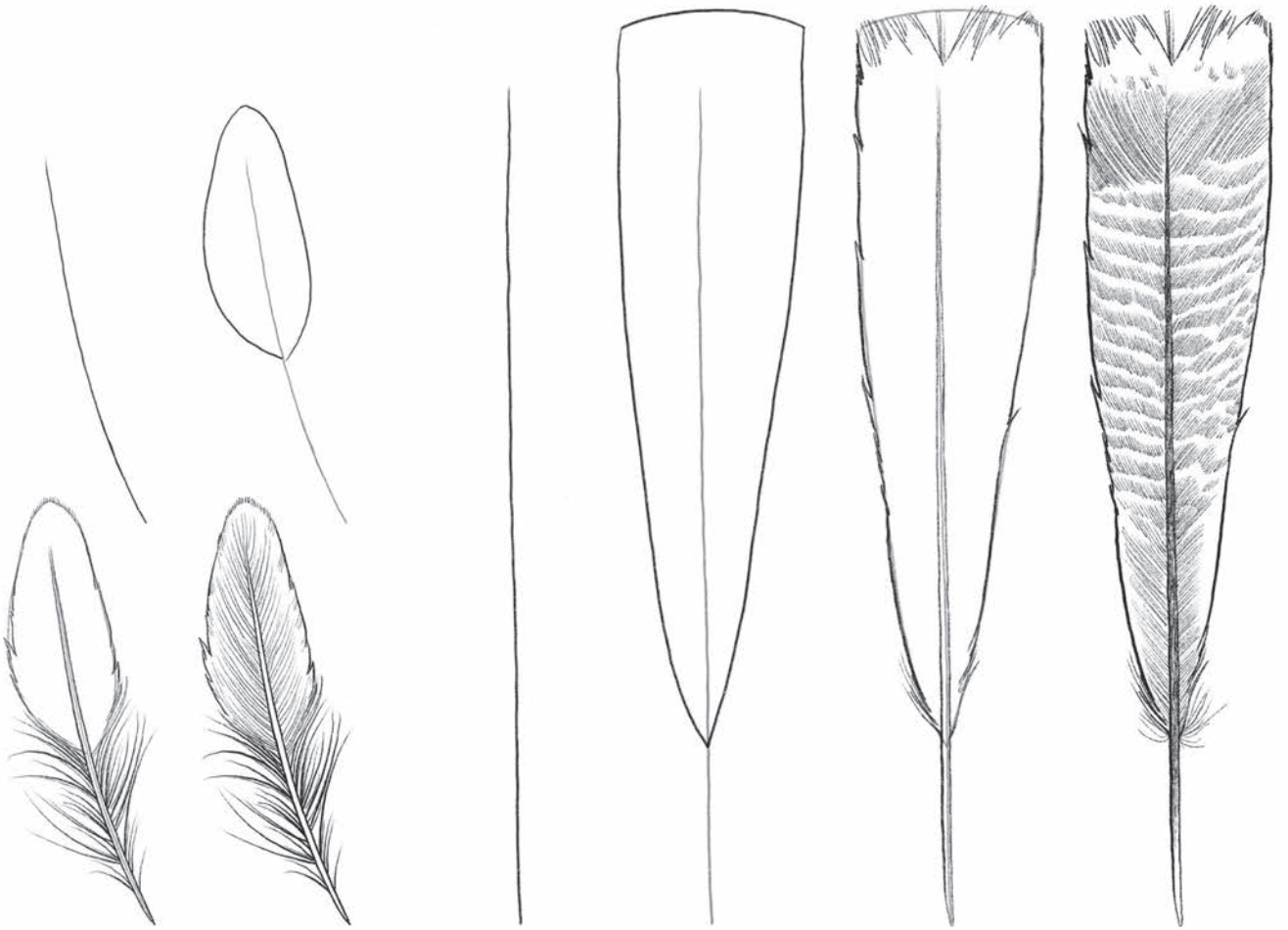






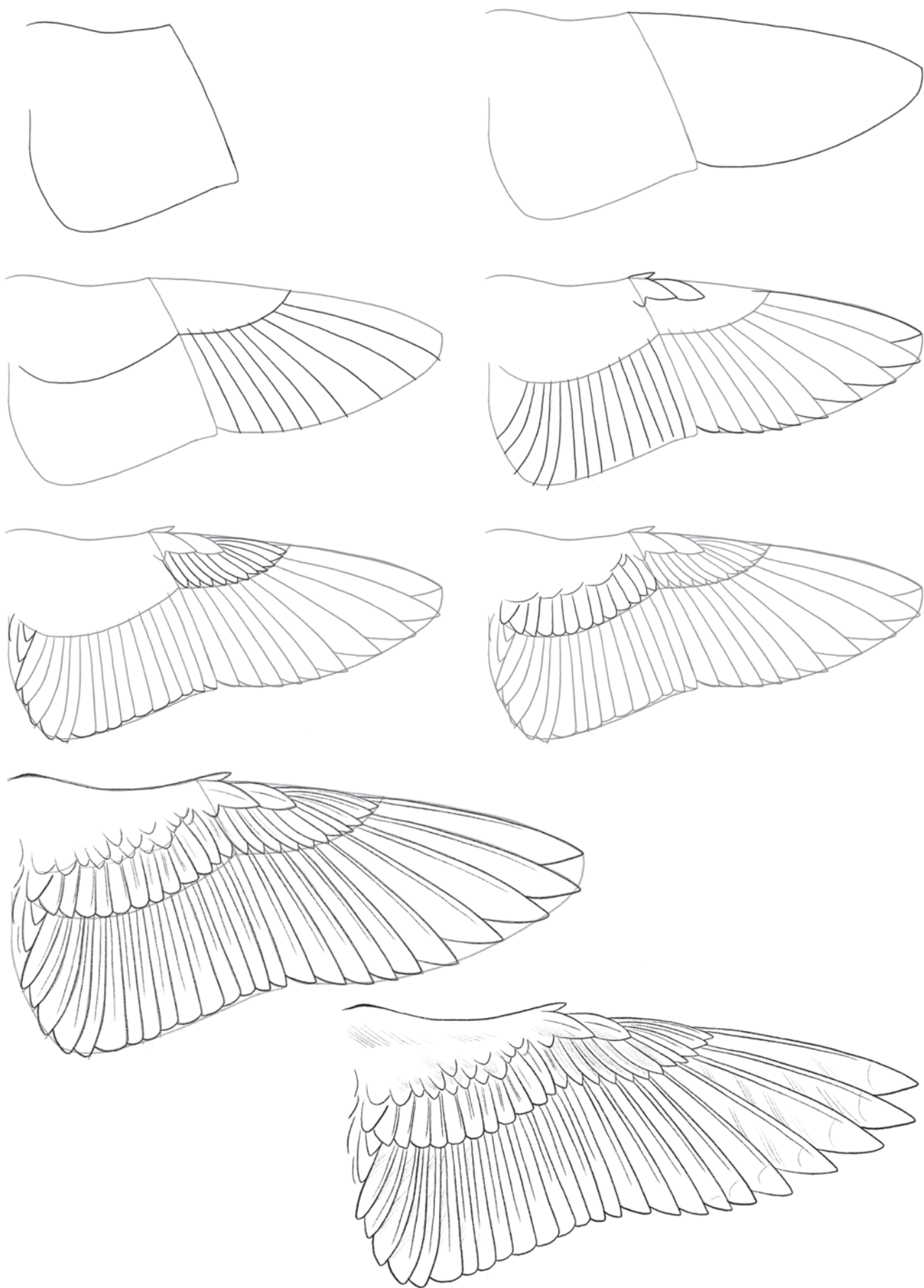


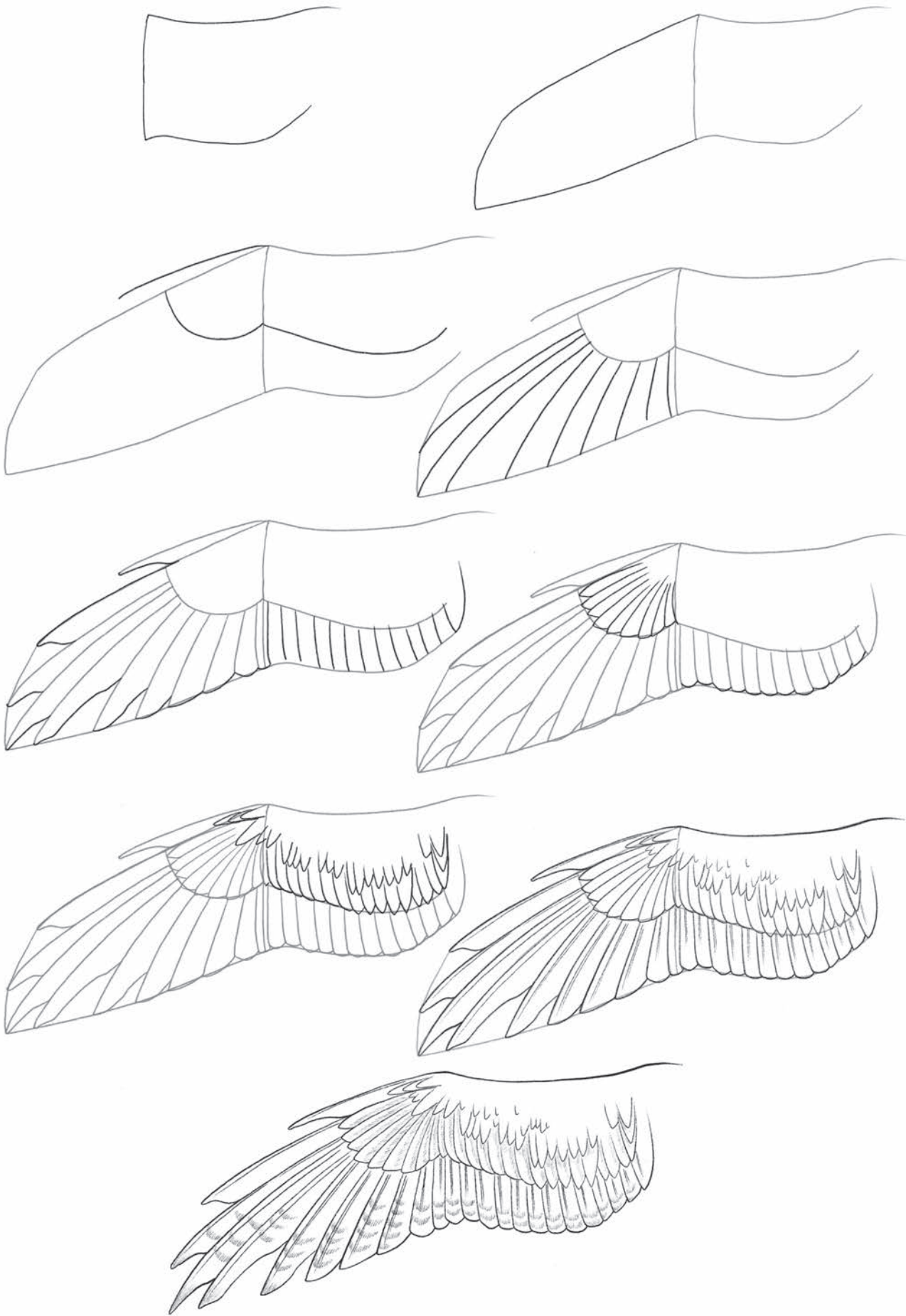
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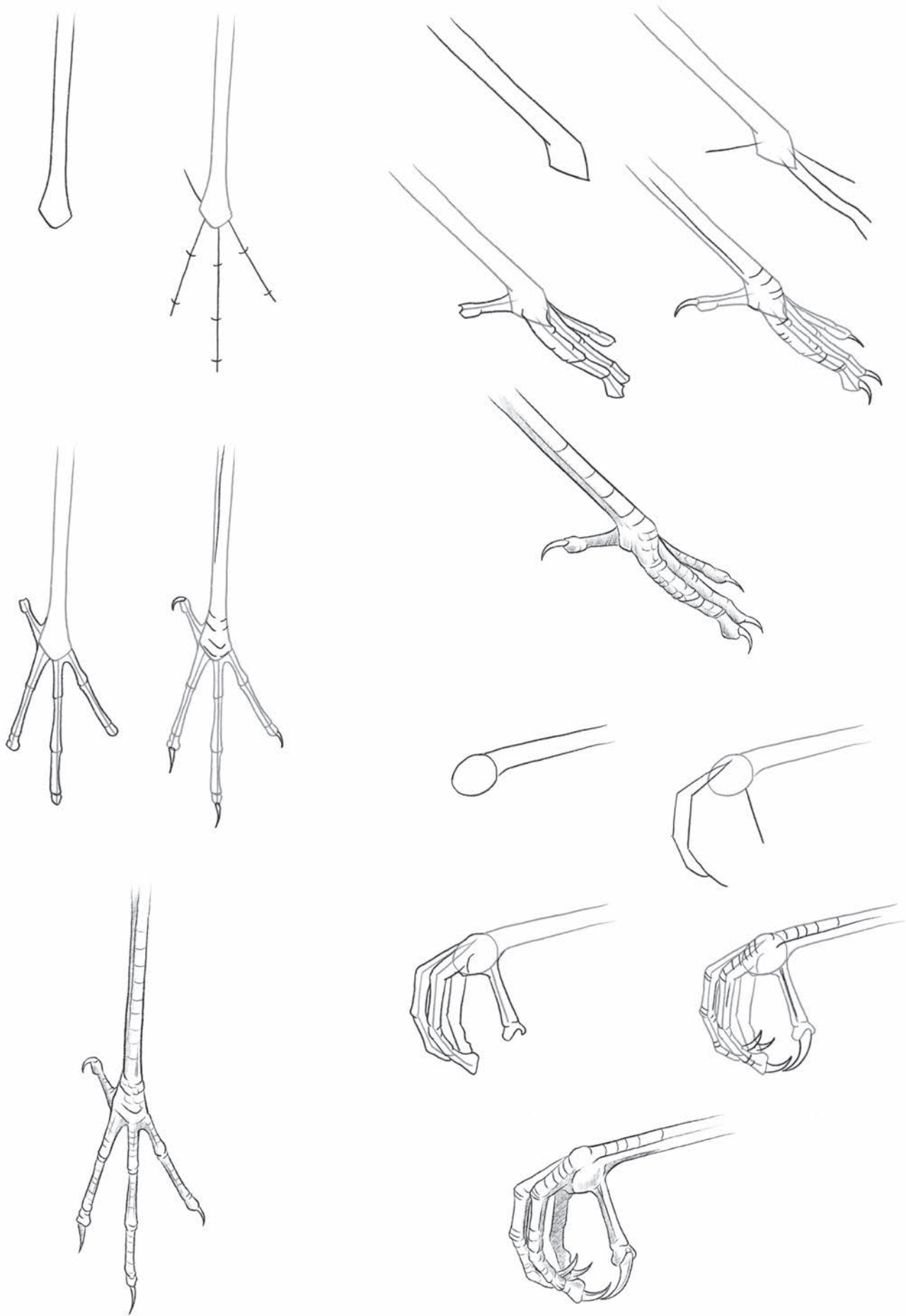


Secondary

Wing

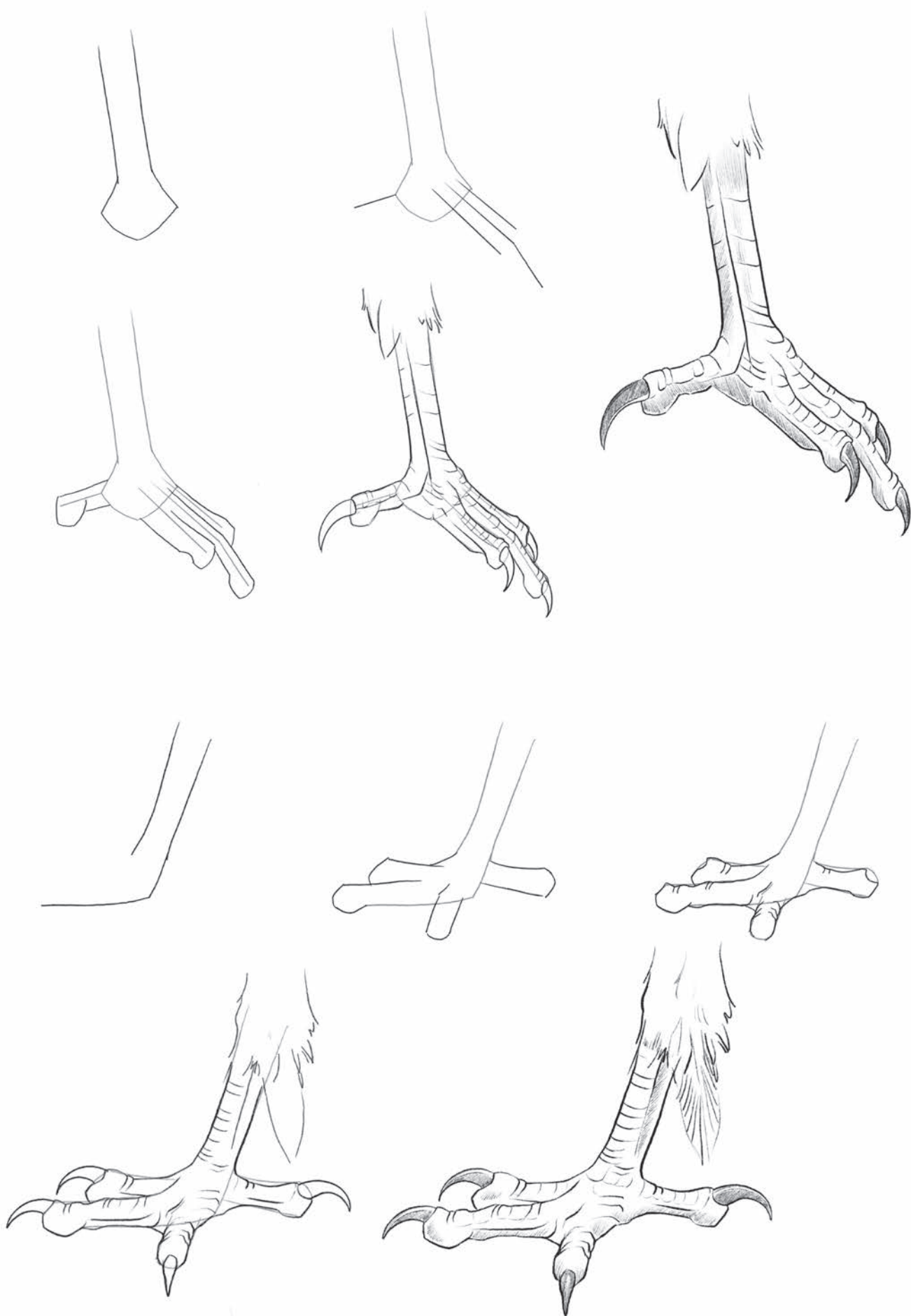


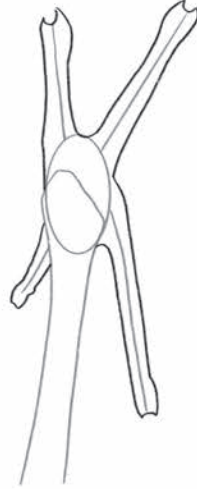
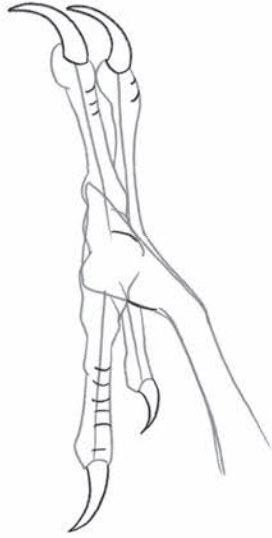
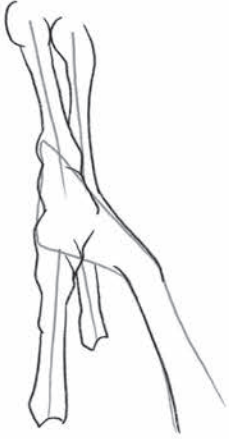
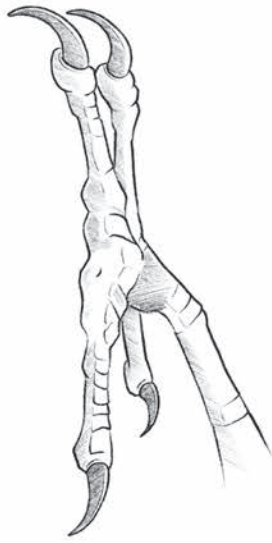
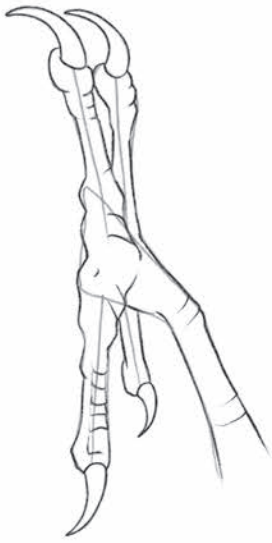


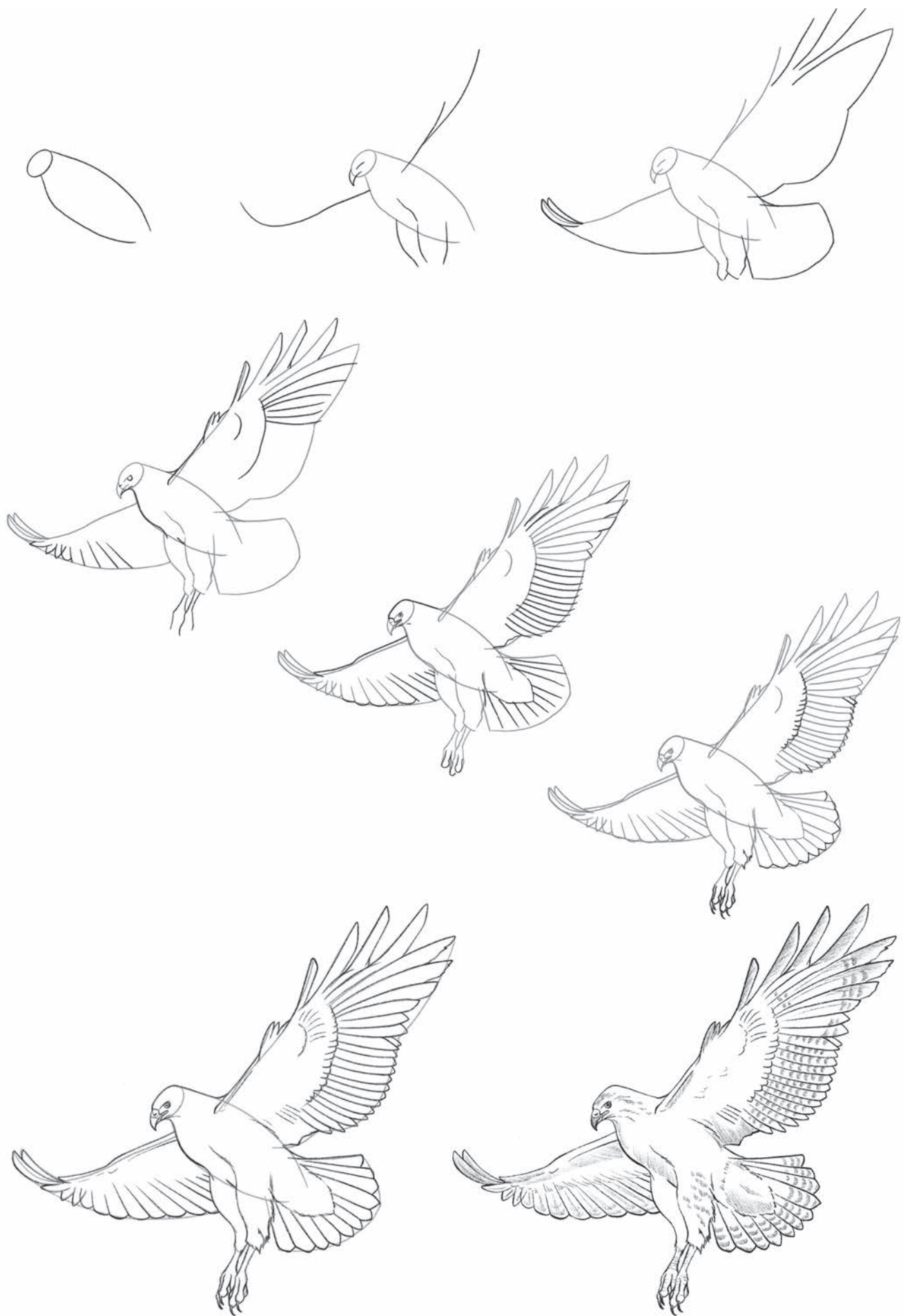




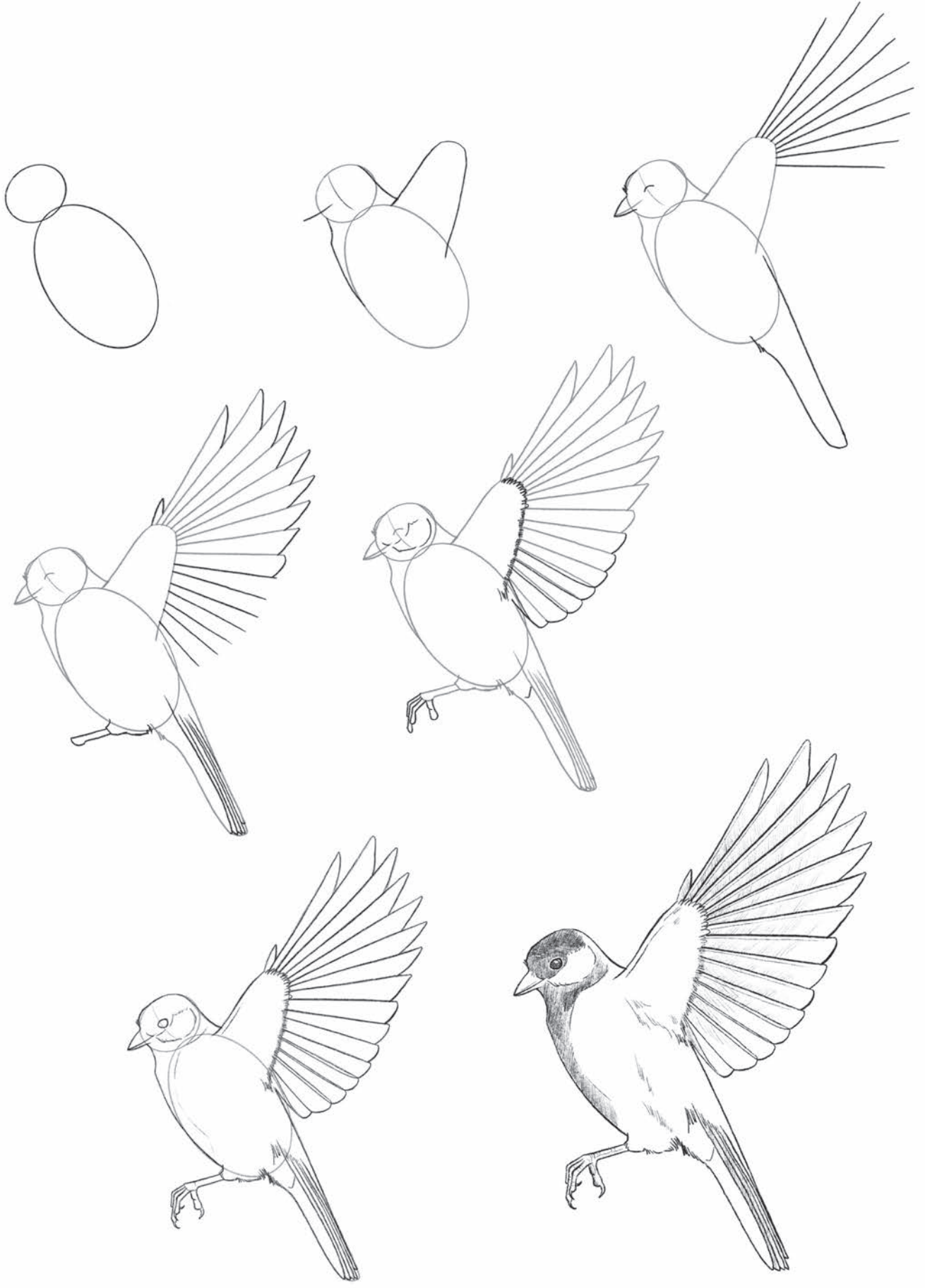


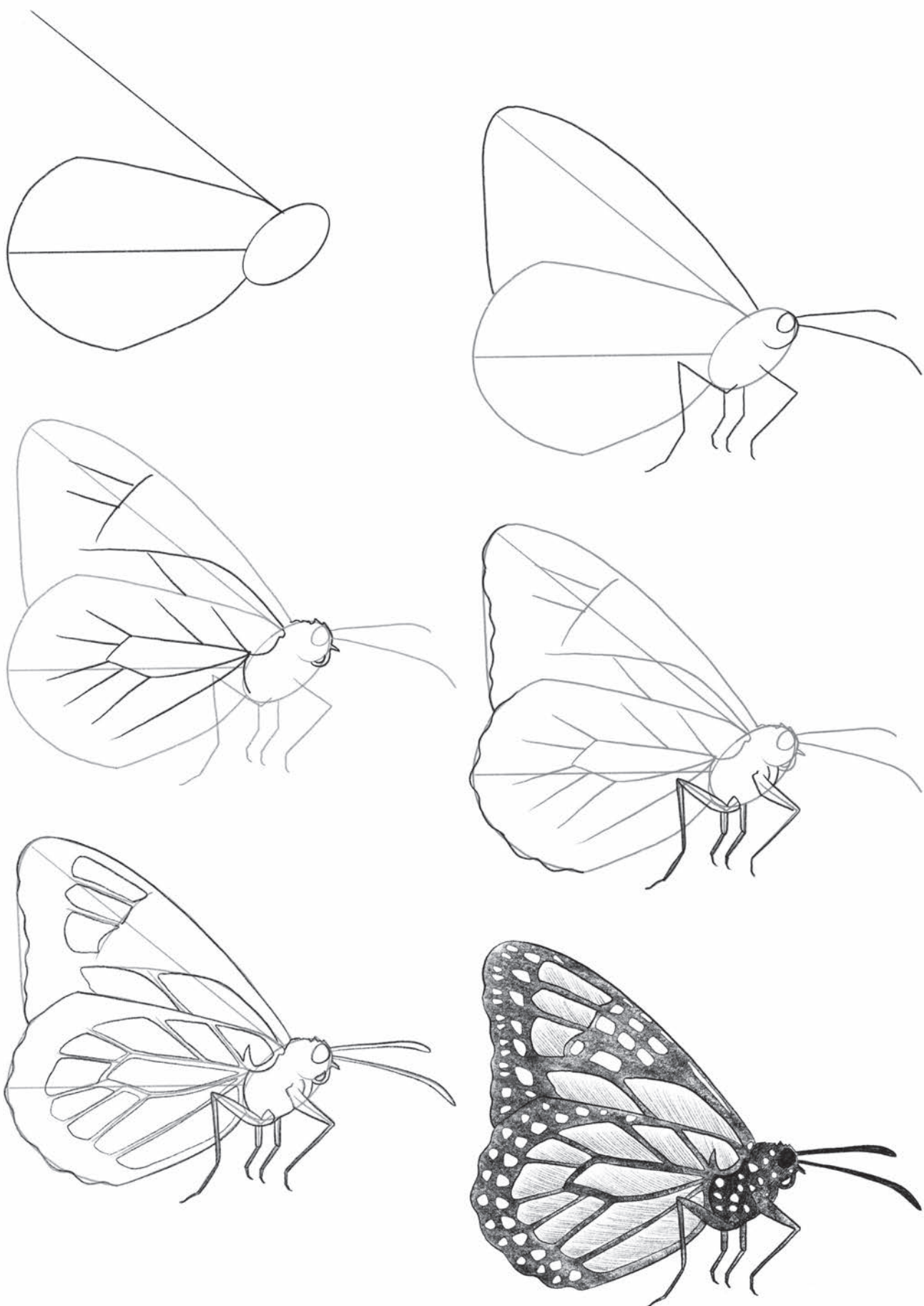


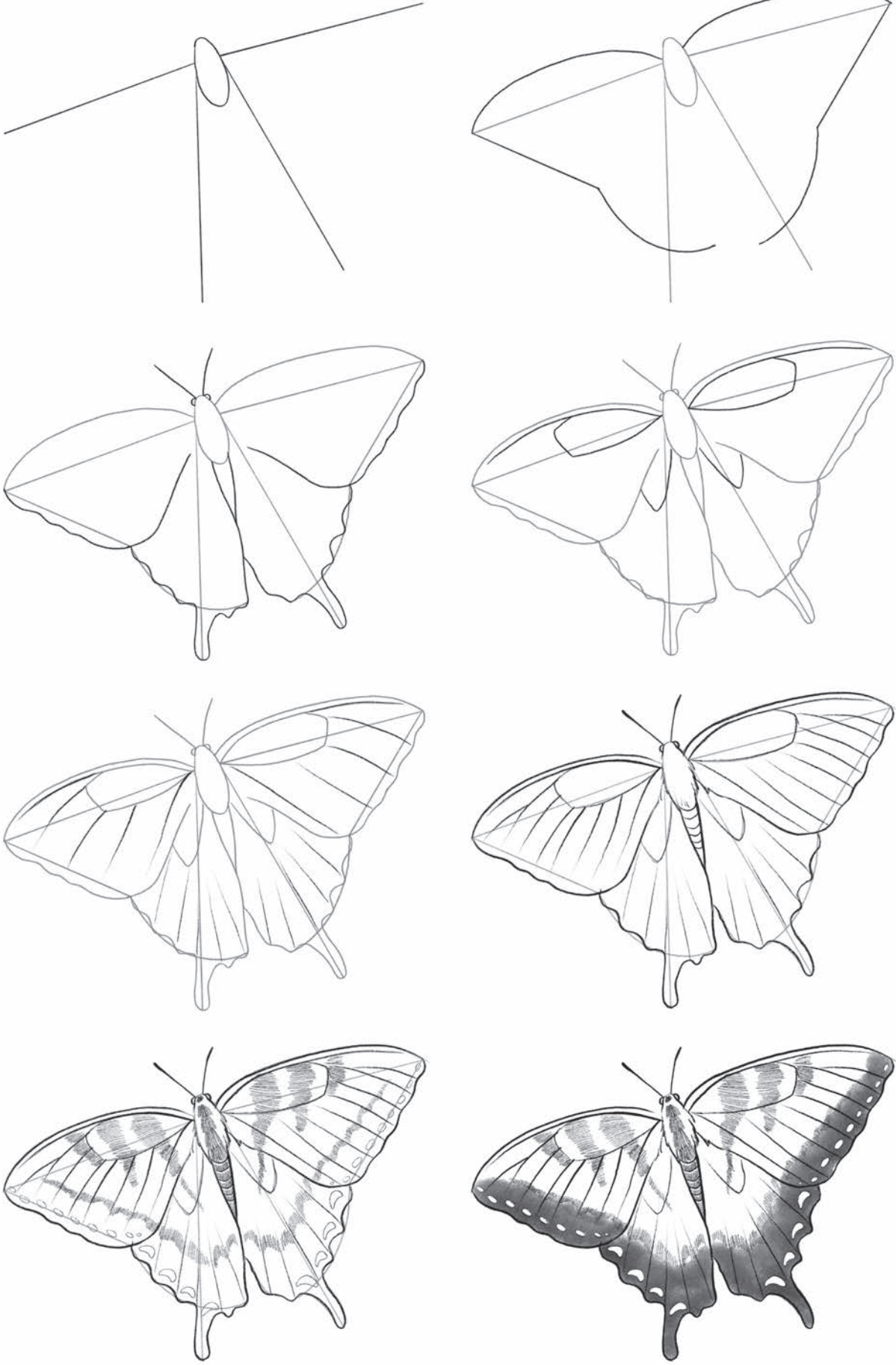




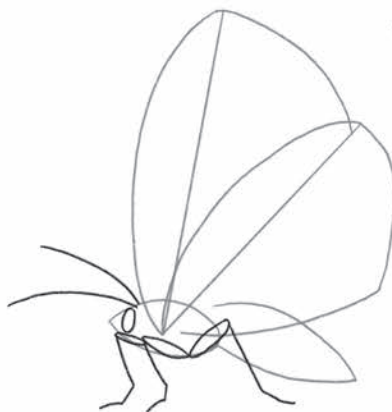
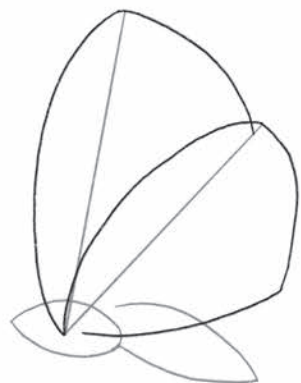
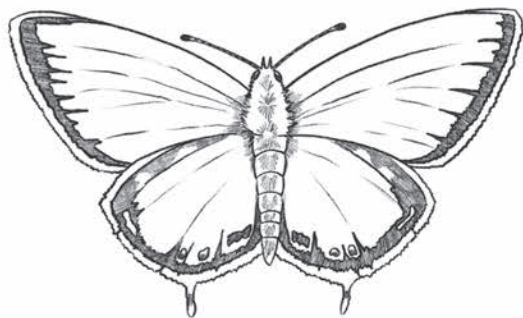
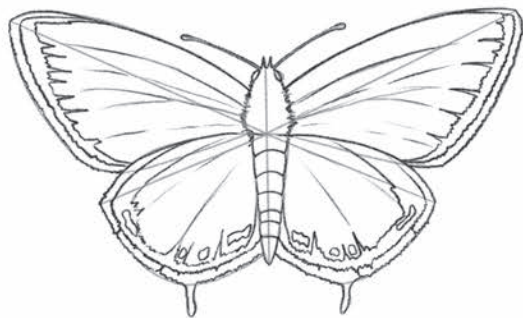
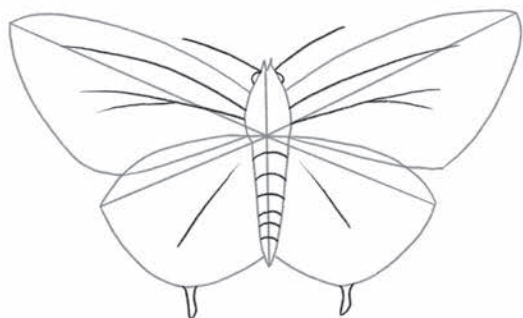
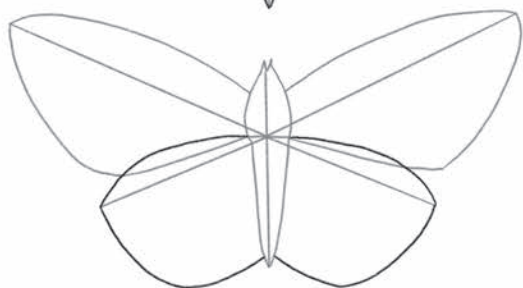
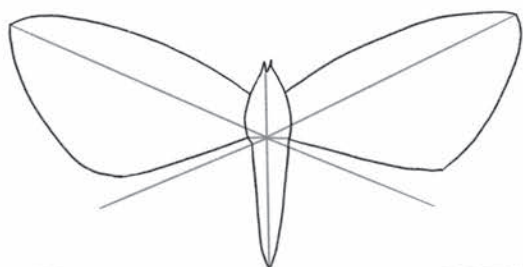
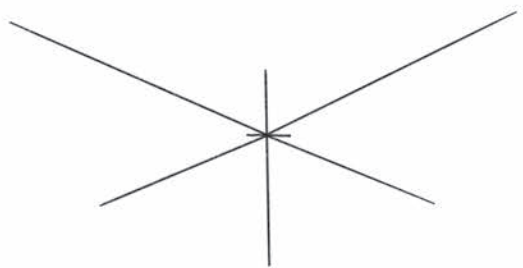




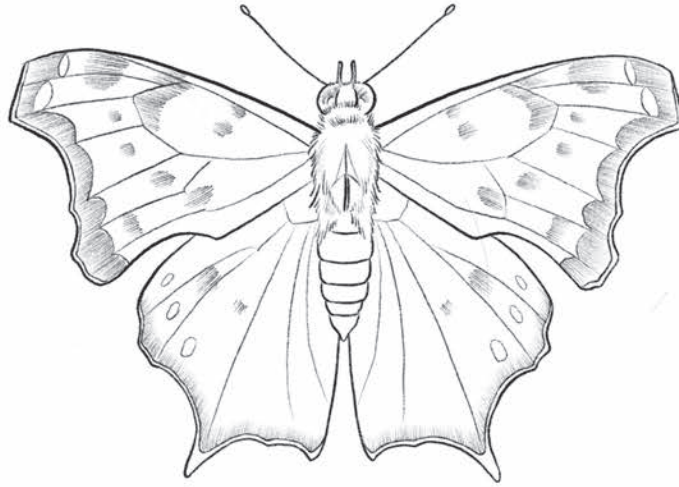
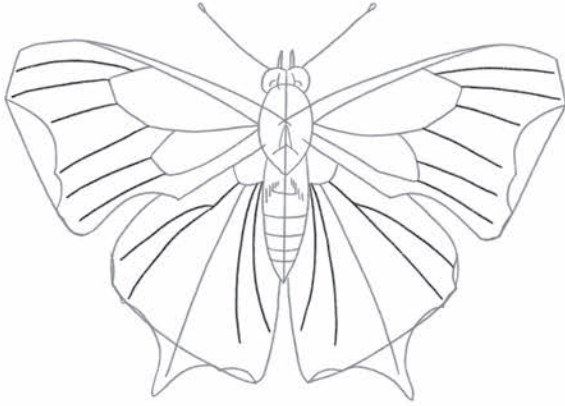
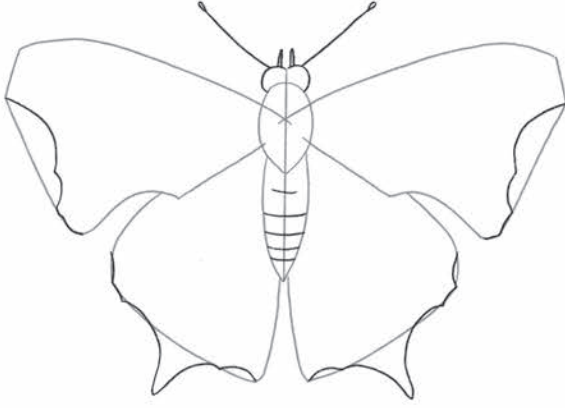
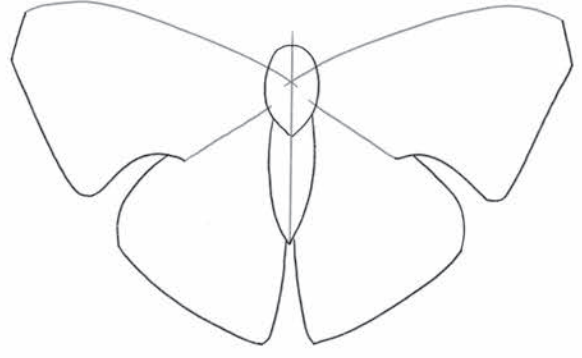
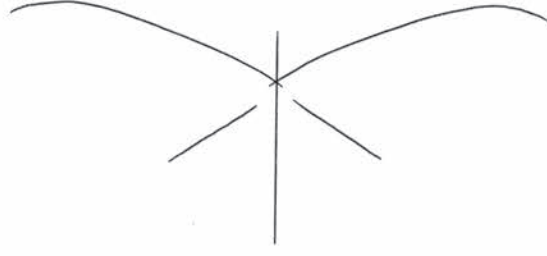


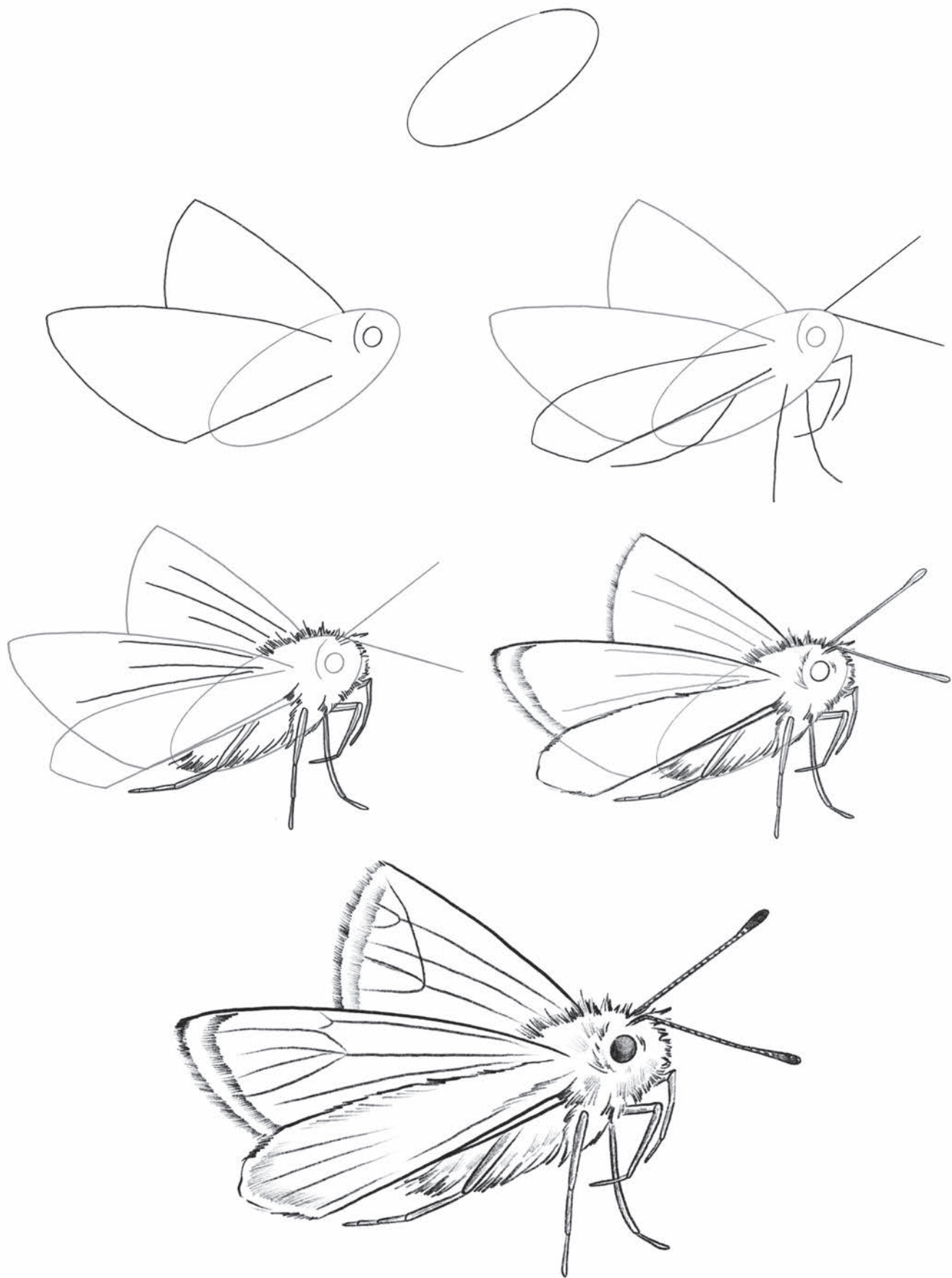


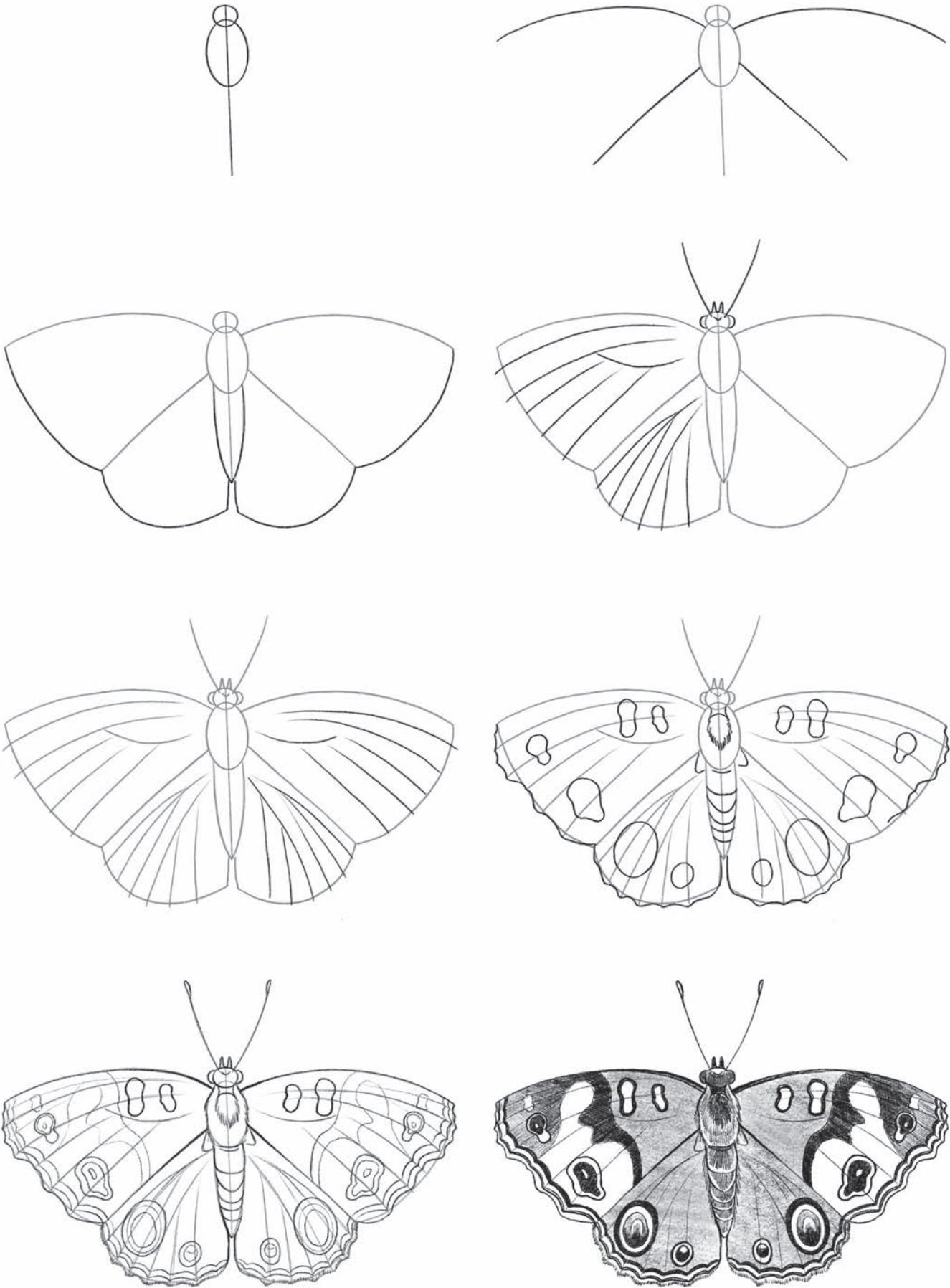




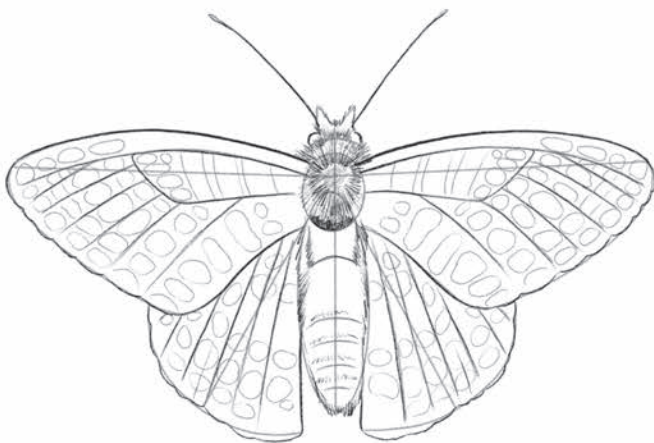
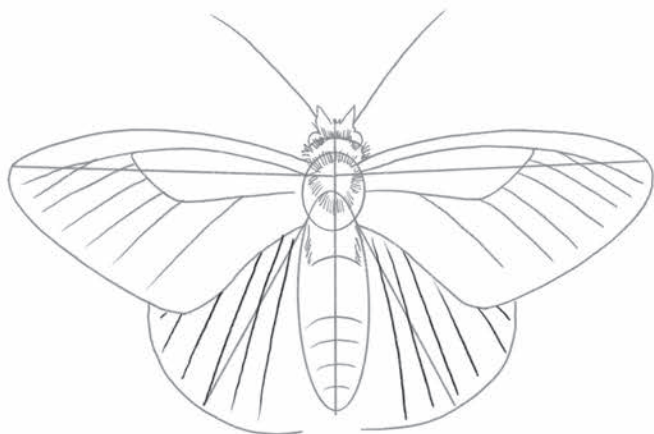
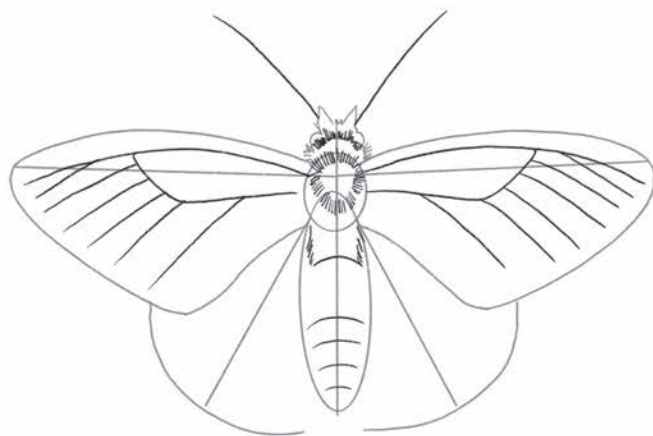
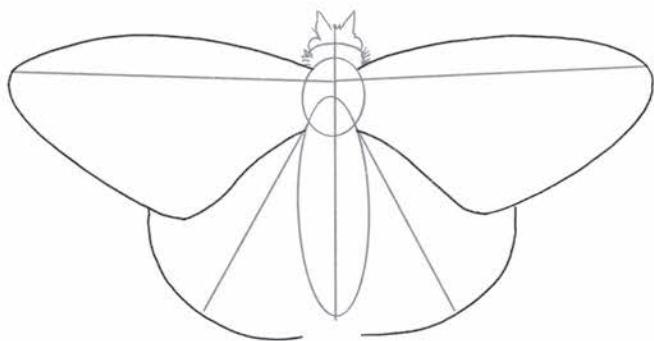
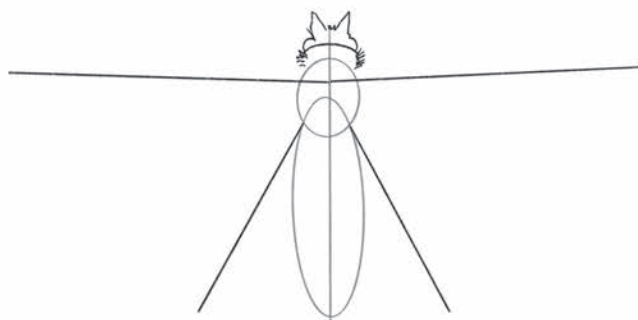




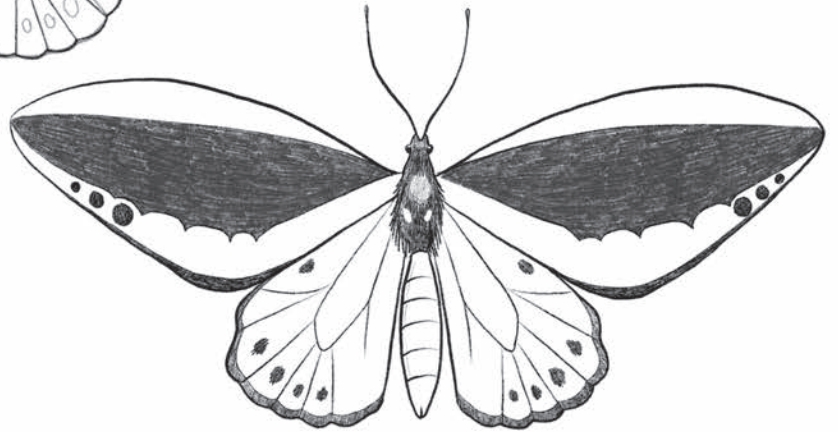
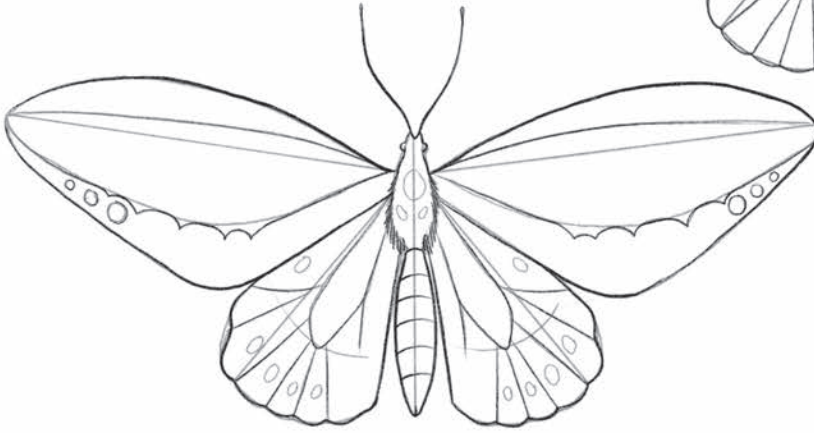
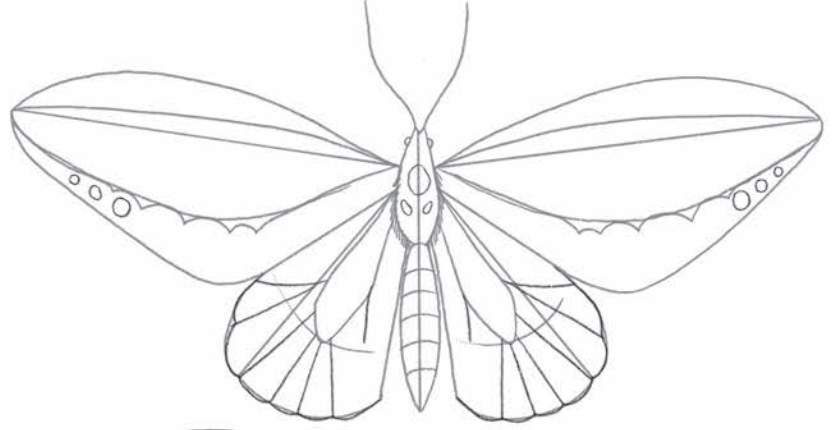
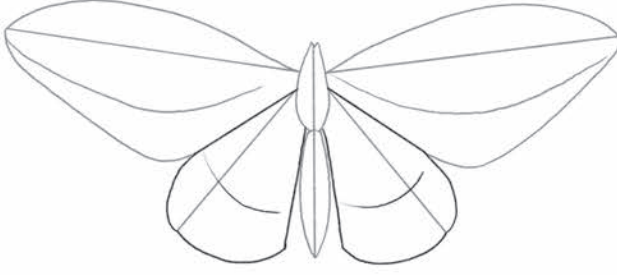
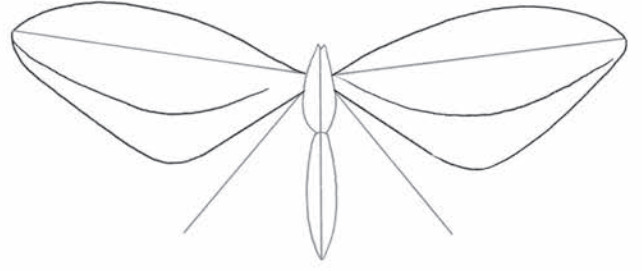
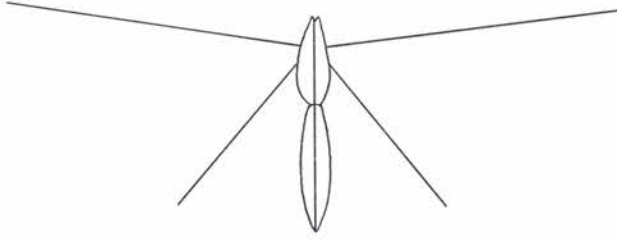


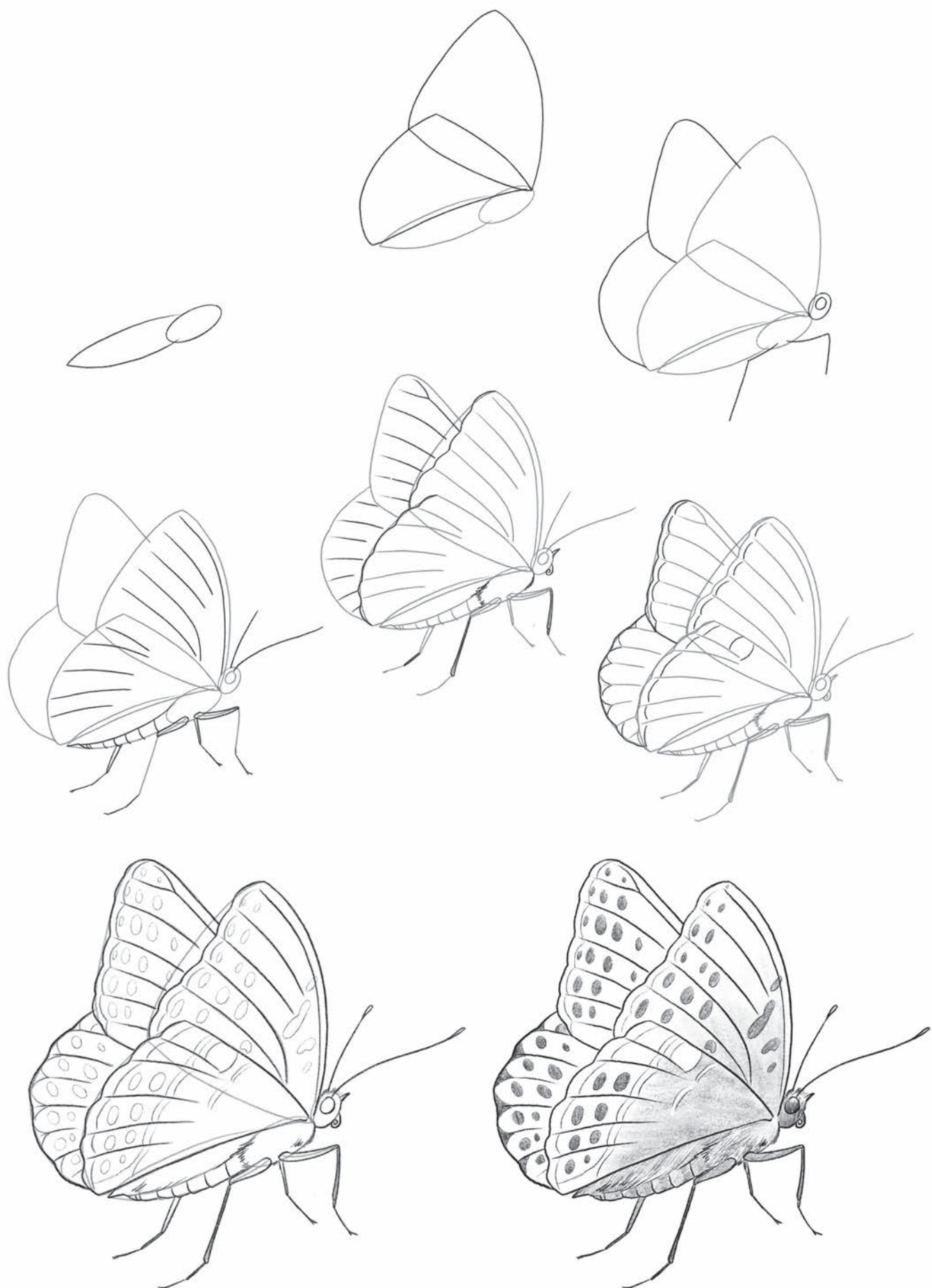




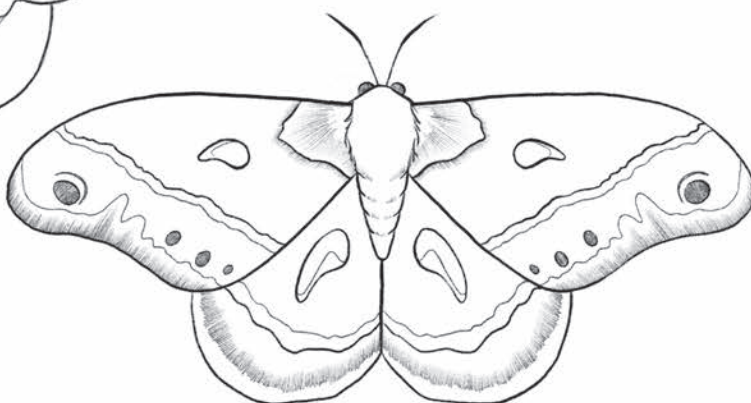
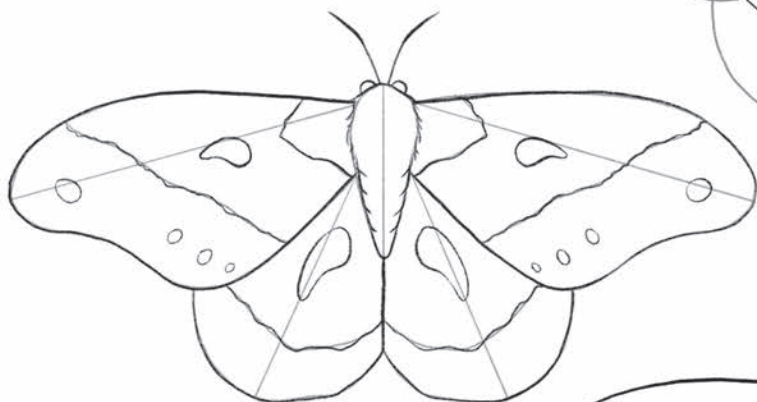
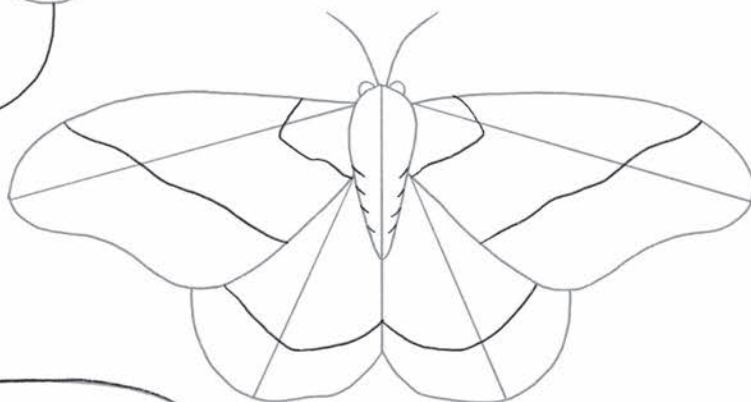
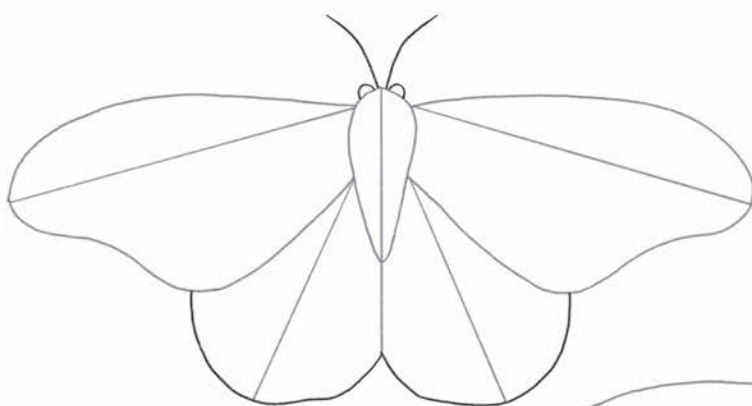
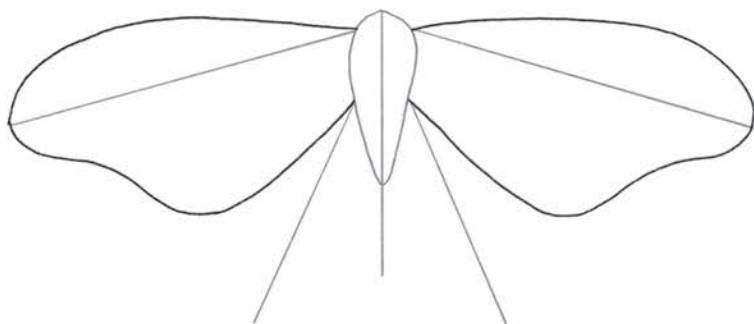
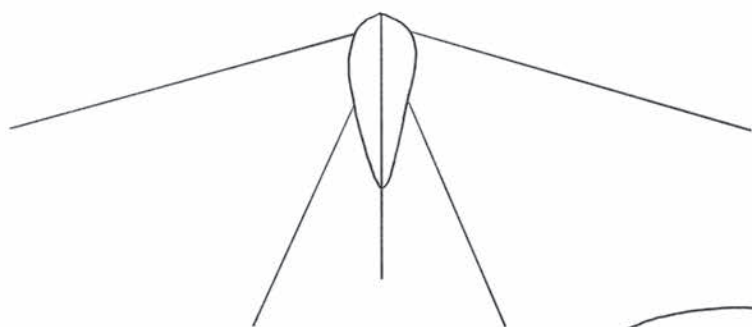




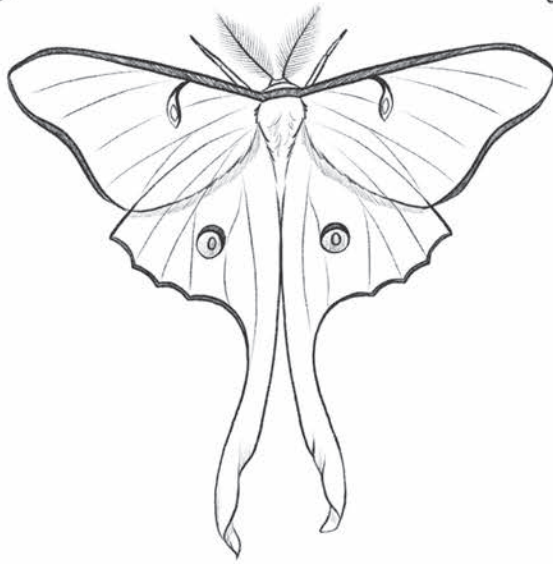
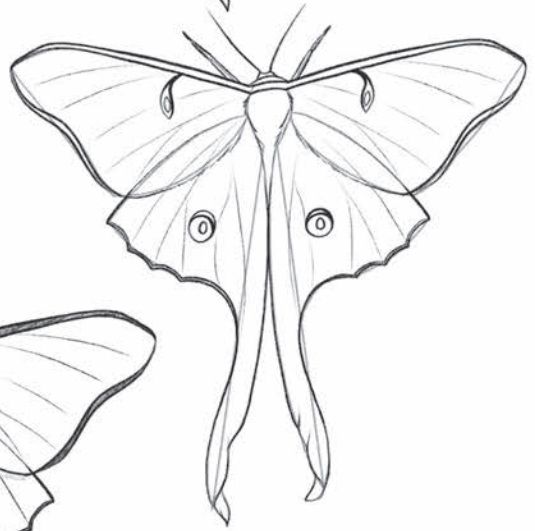
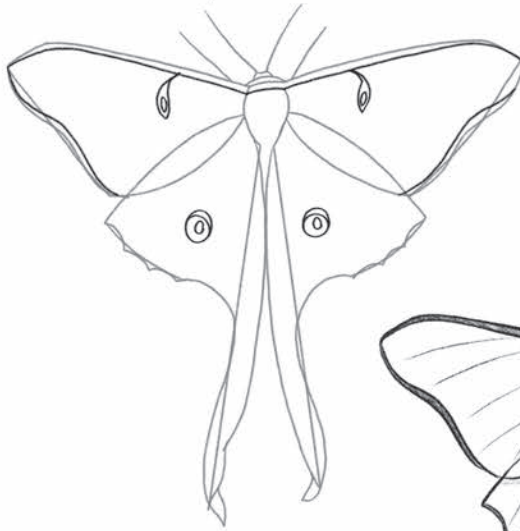
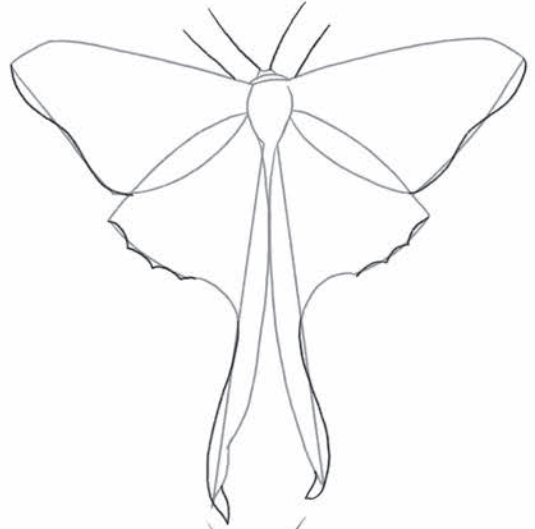
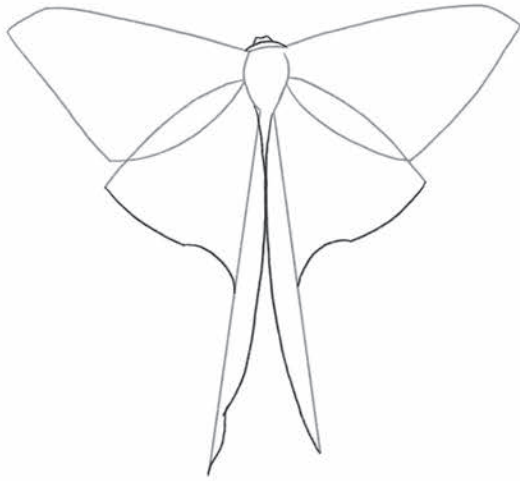
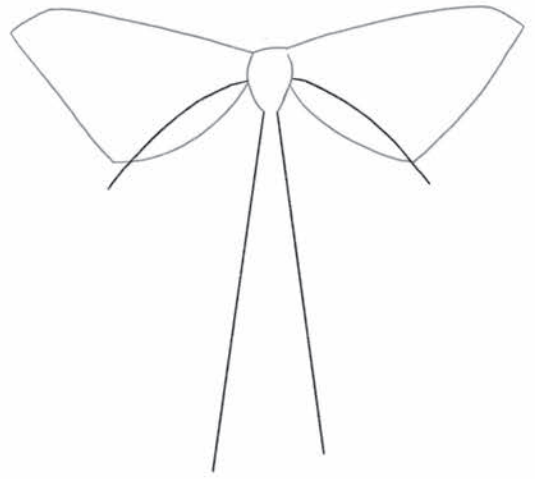
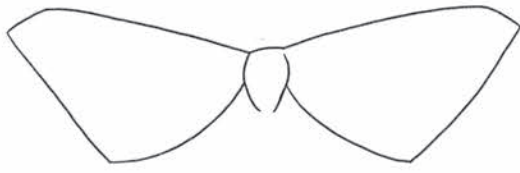


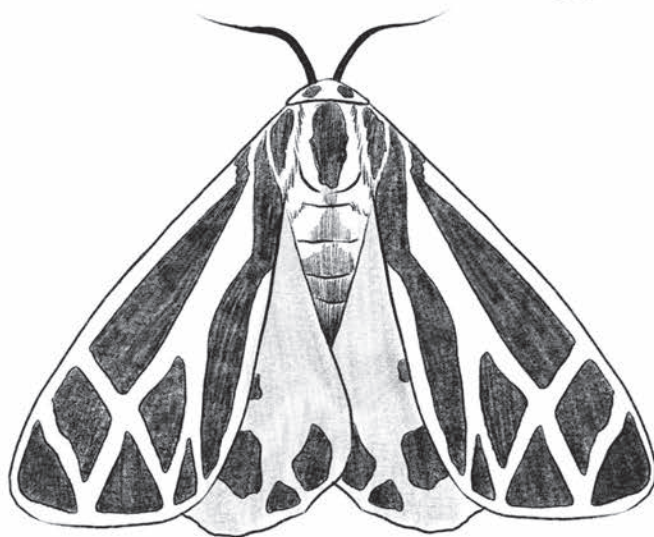
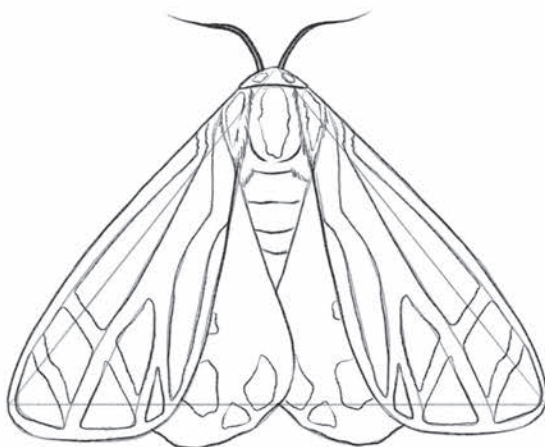
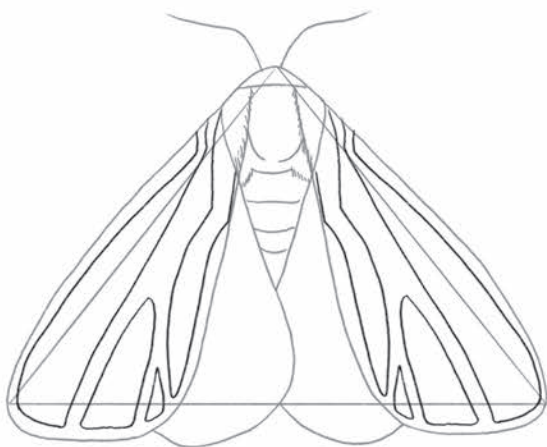
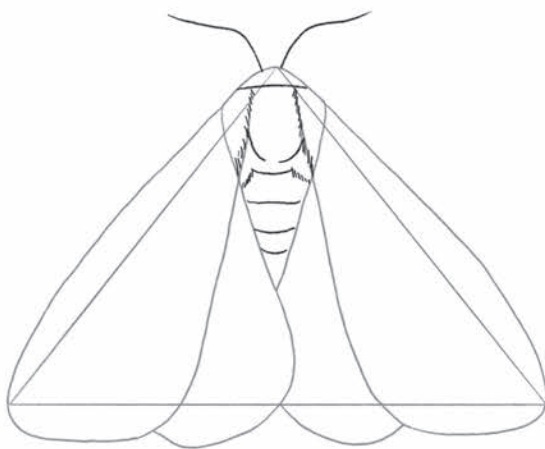
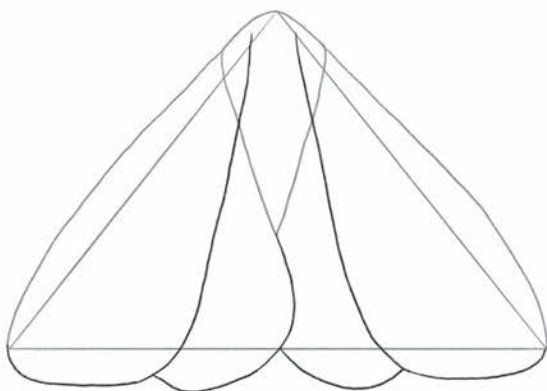
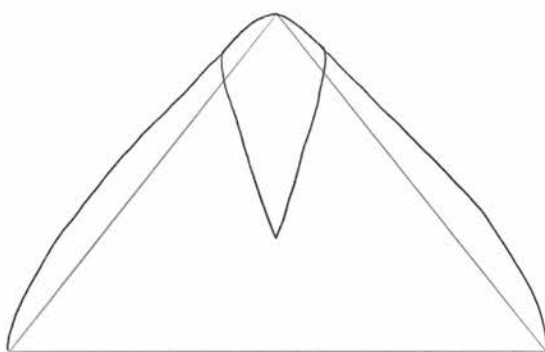
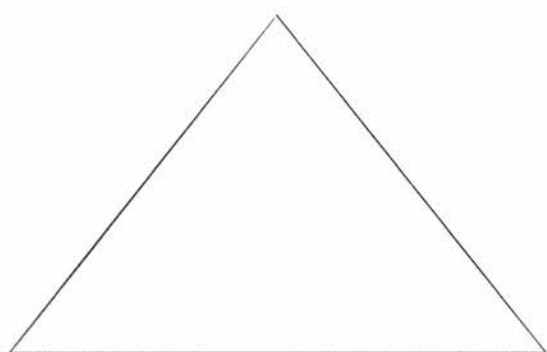


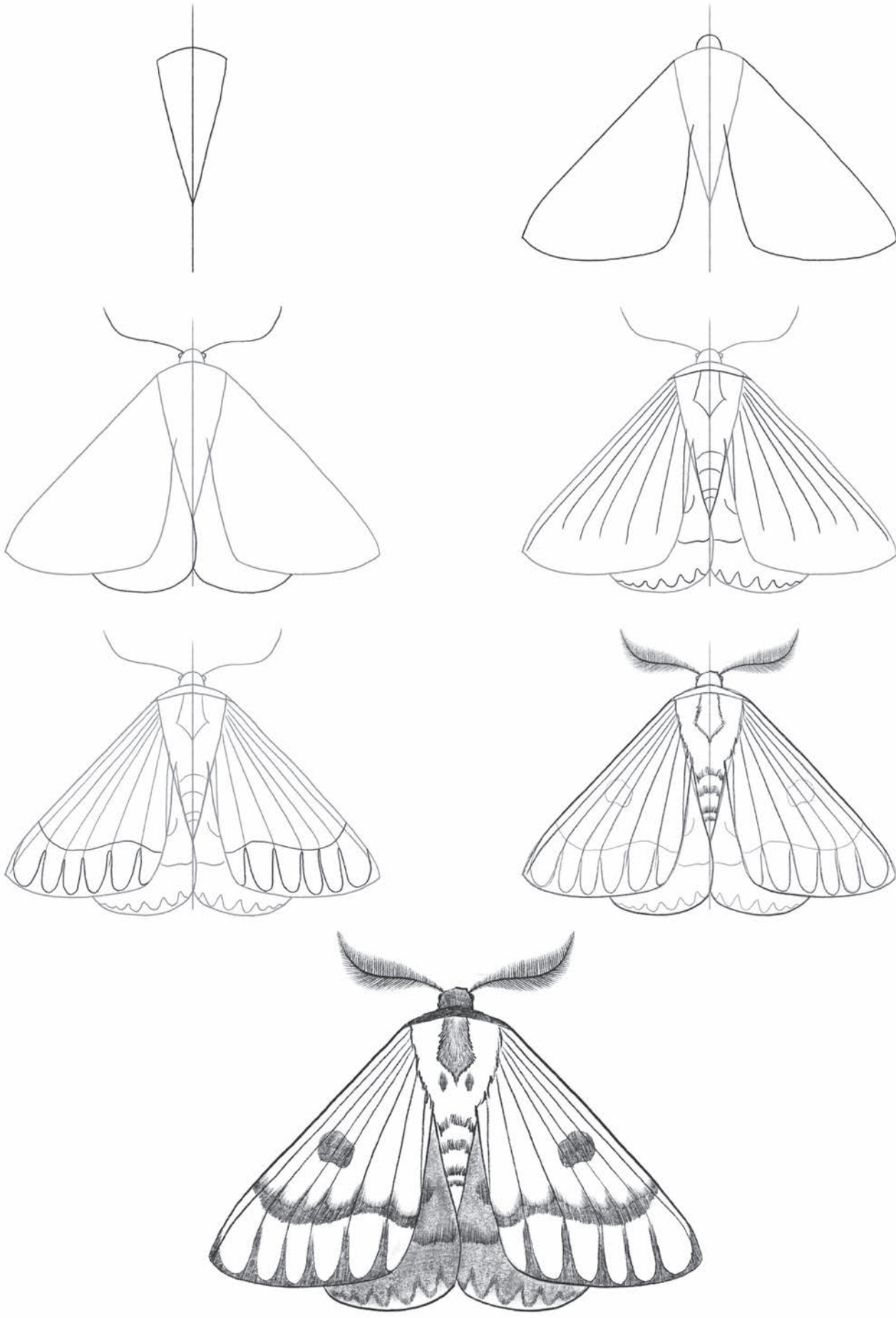


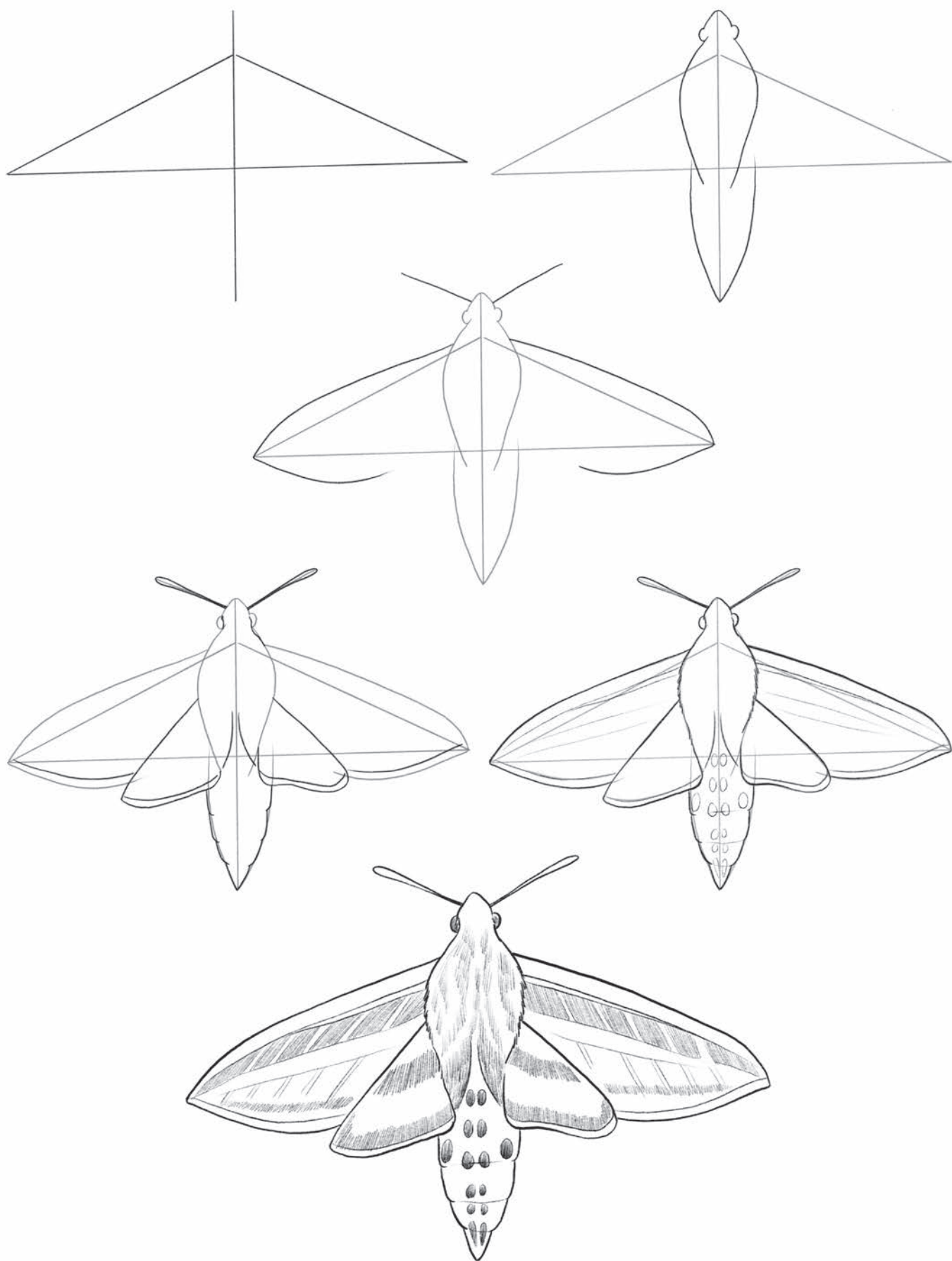




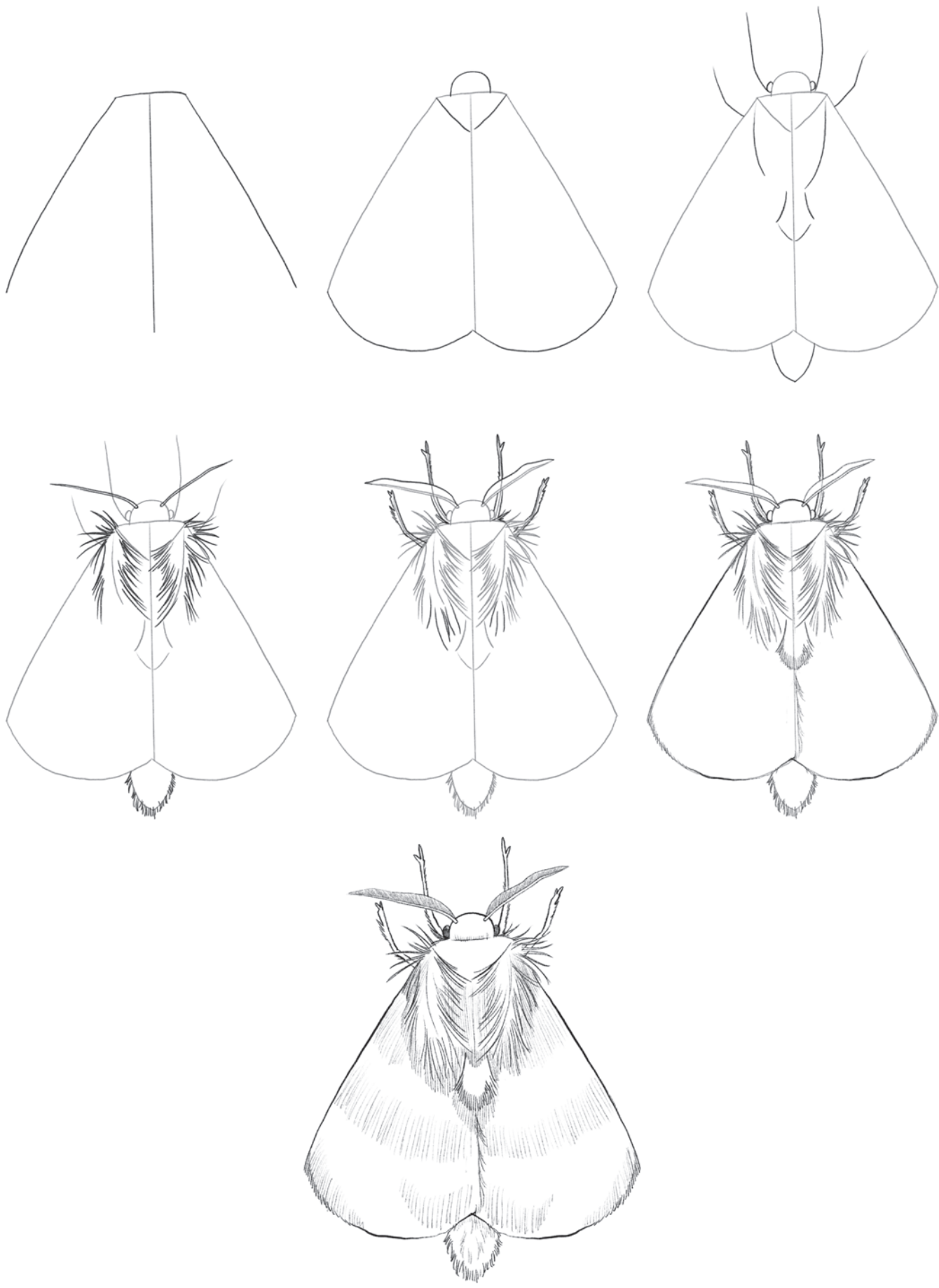


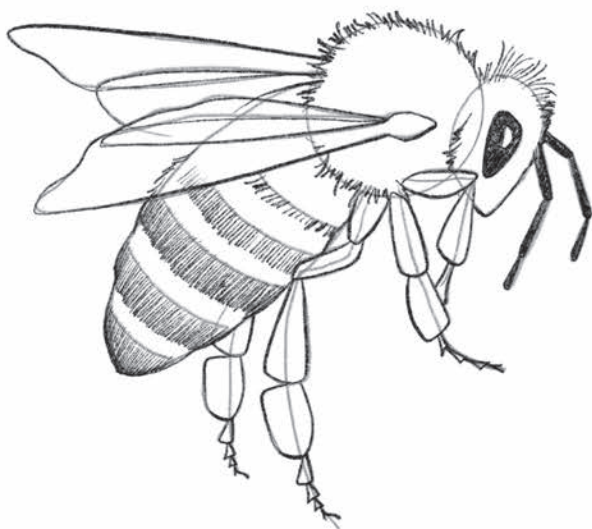
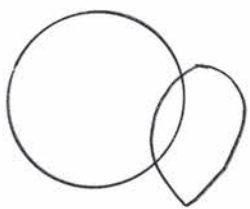


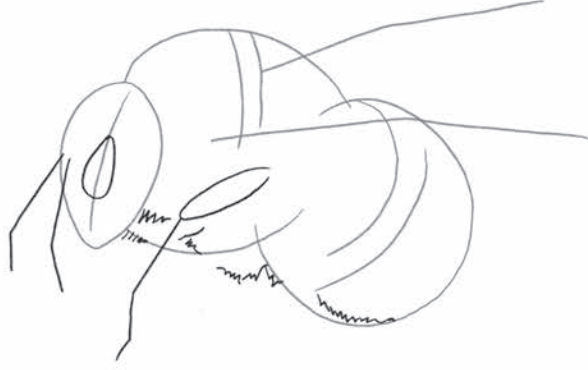
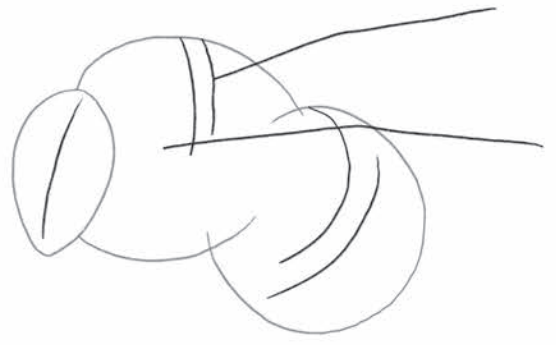
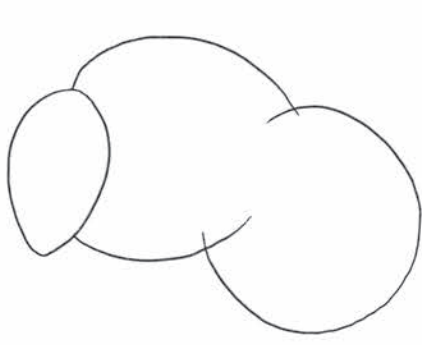
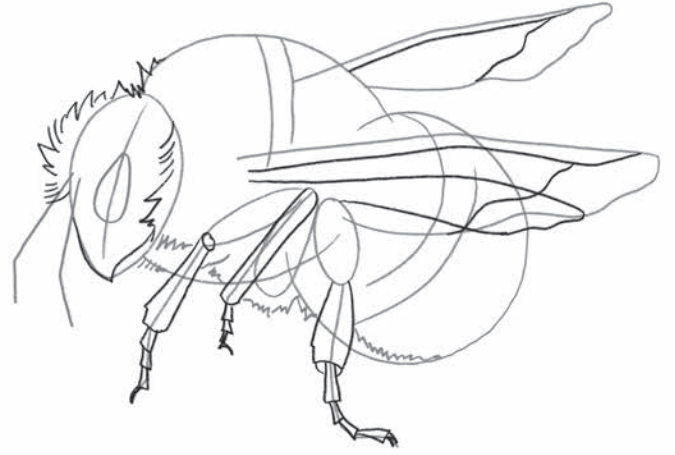
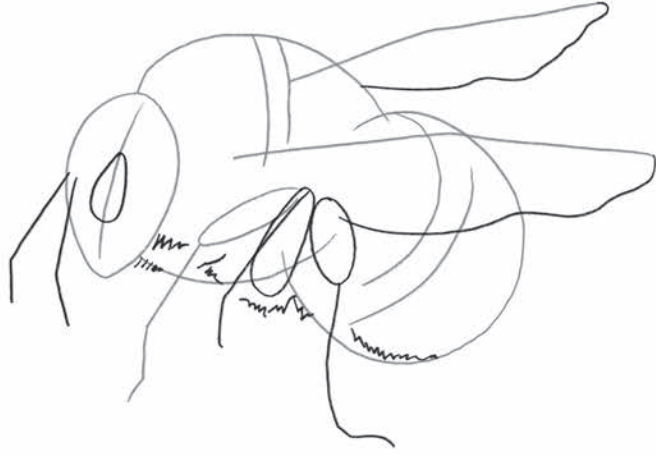
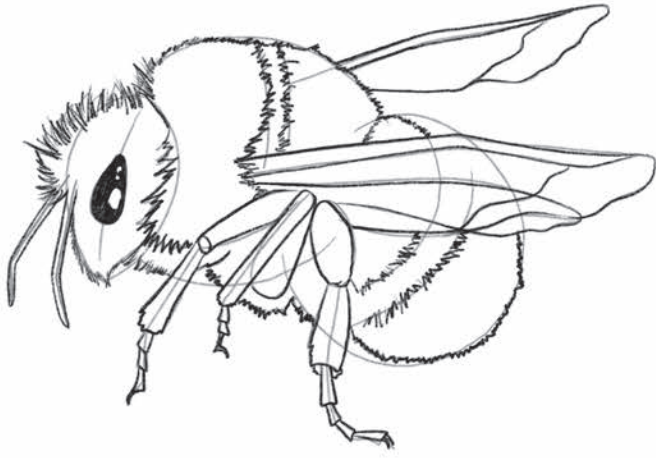


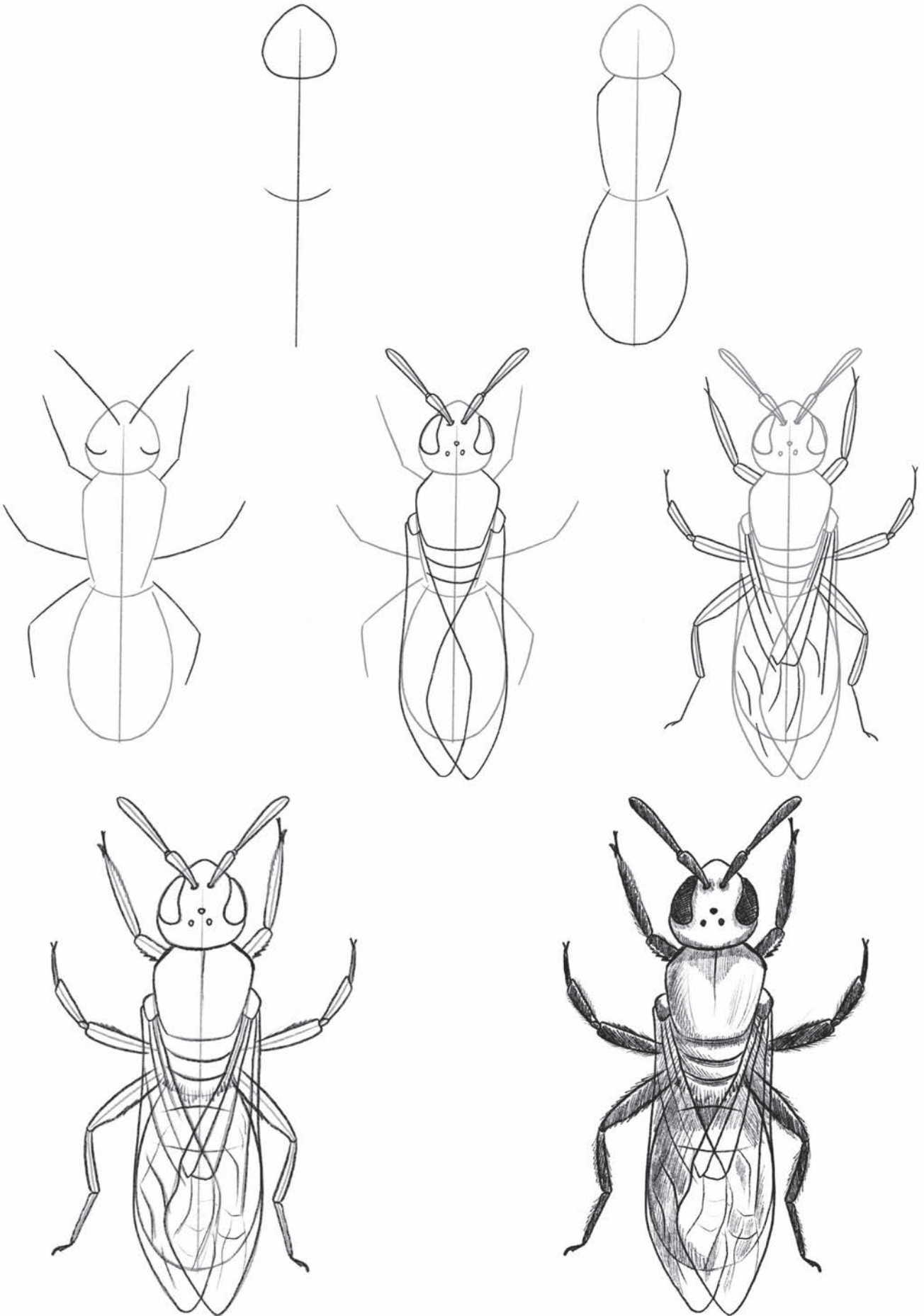




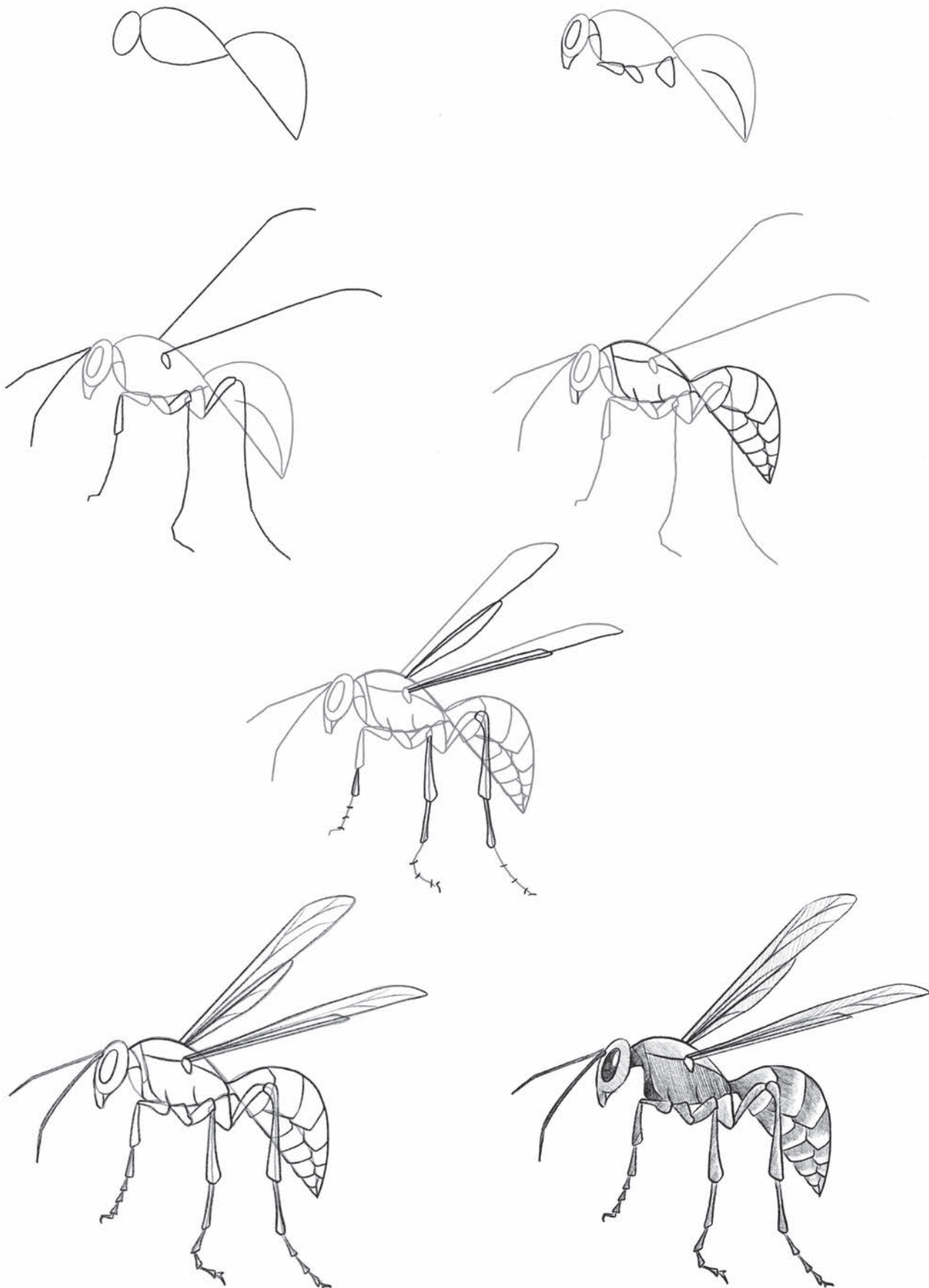


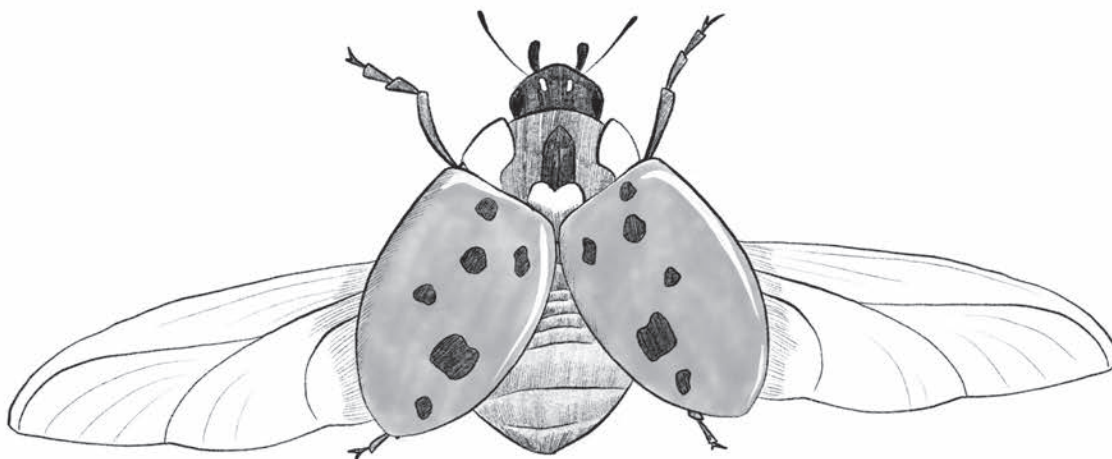
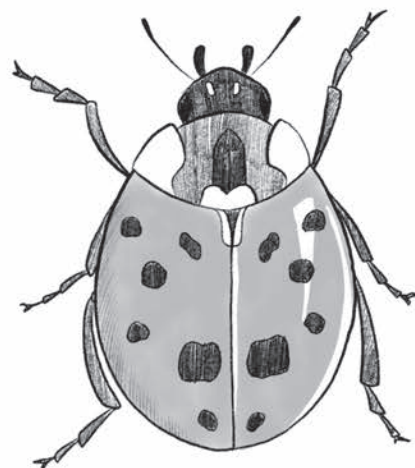
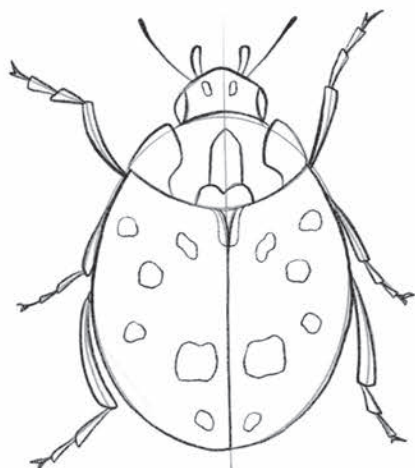
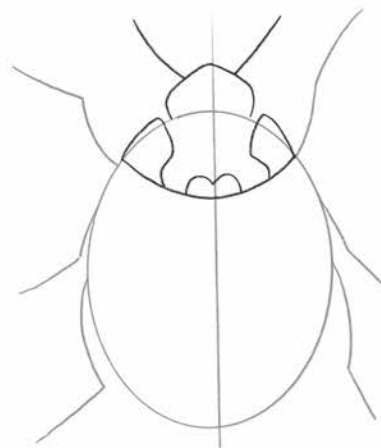
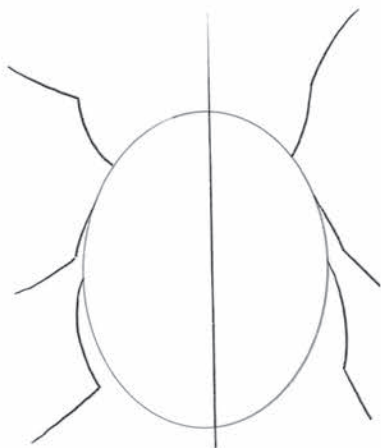
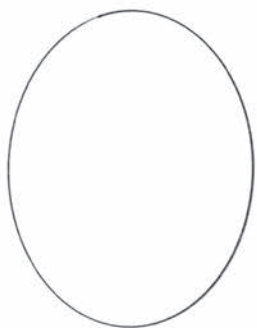


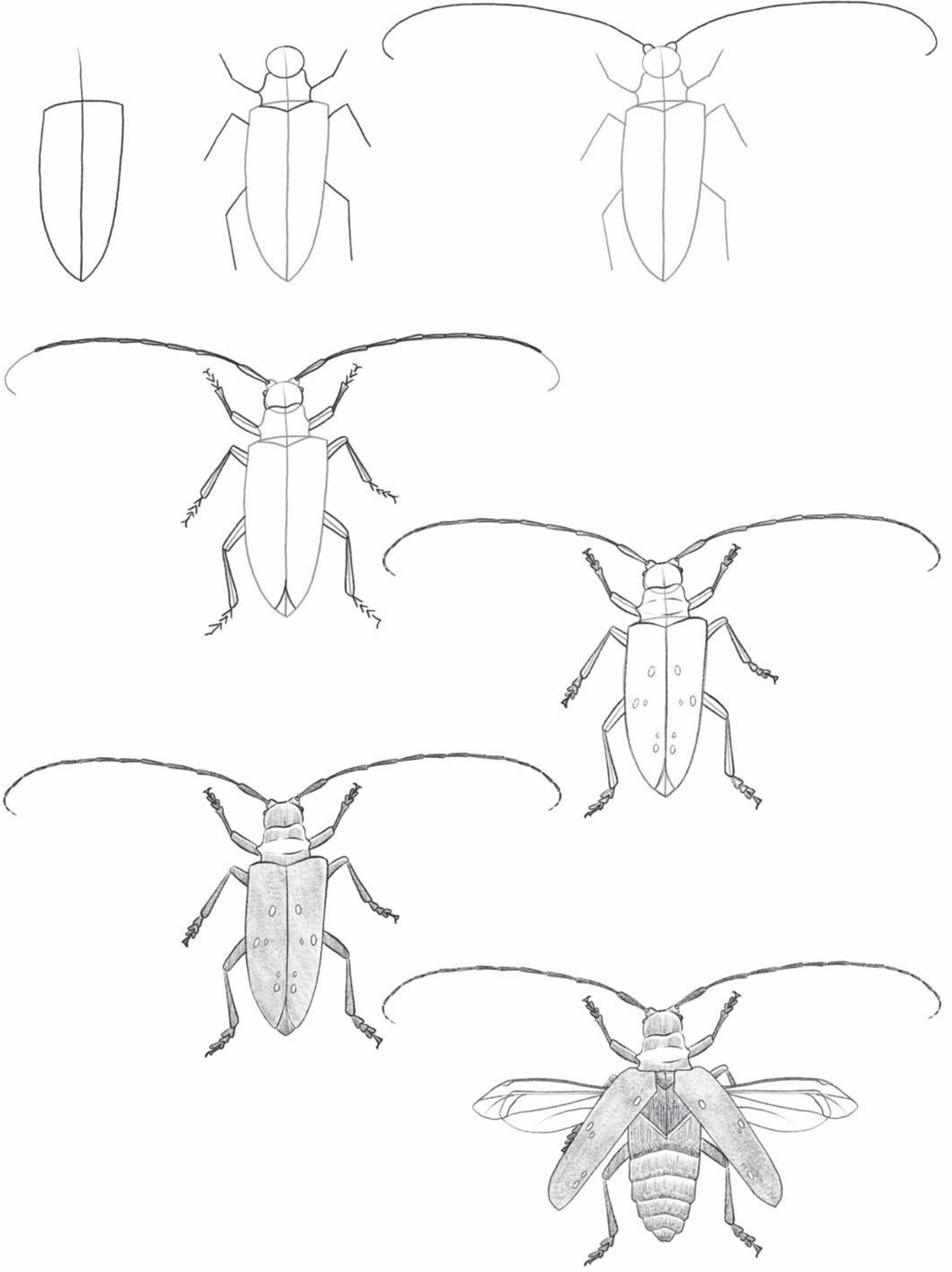


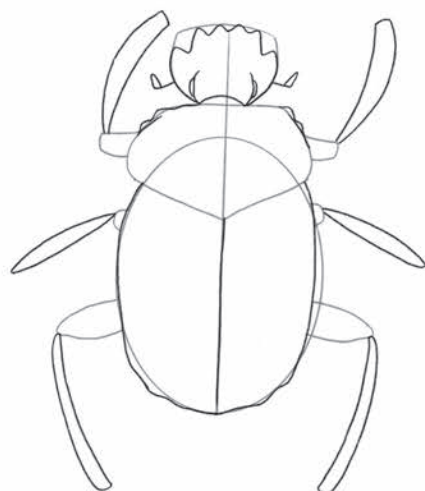
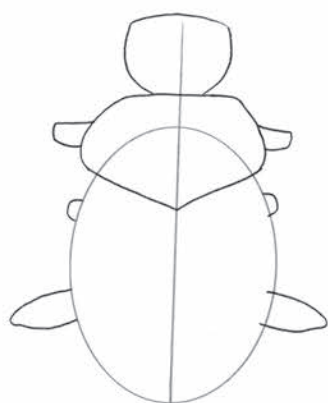
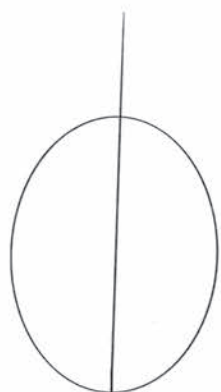




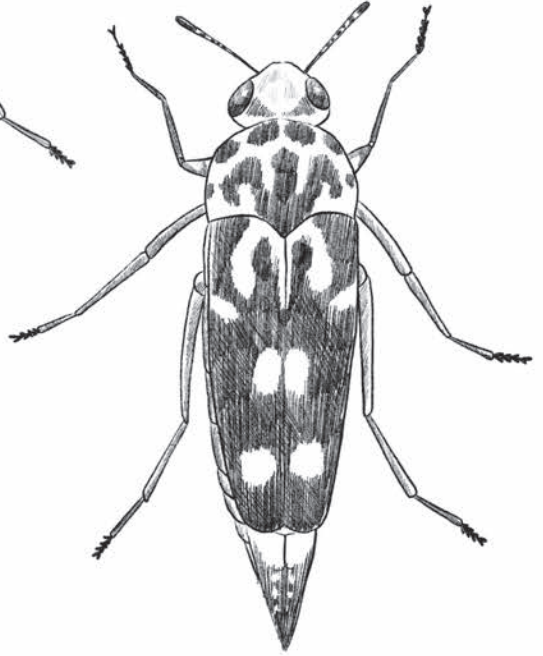
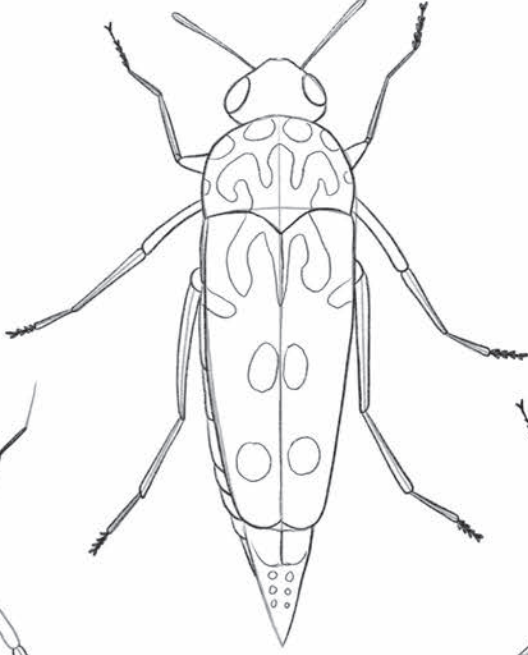
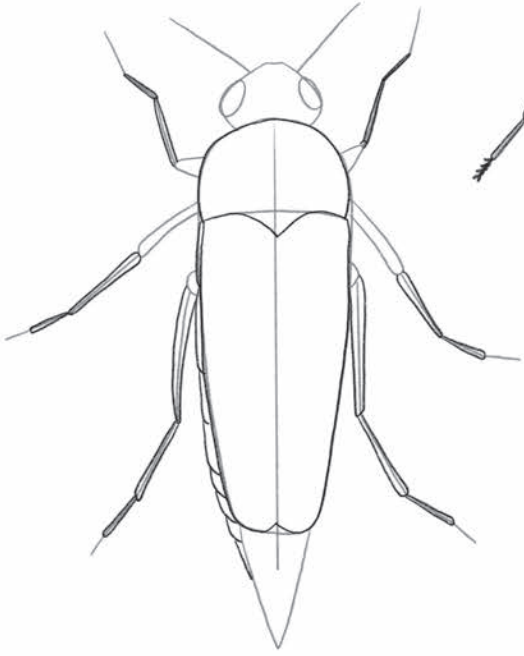
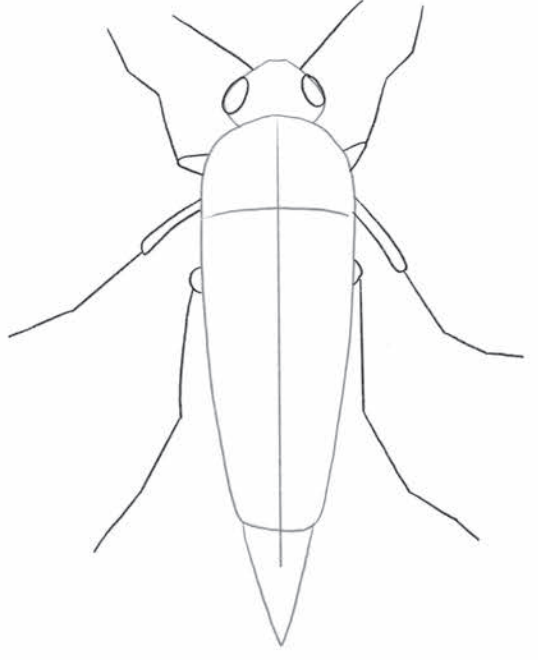
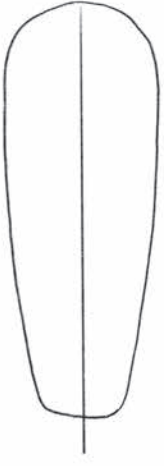


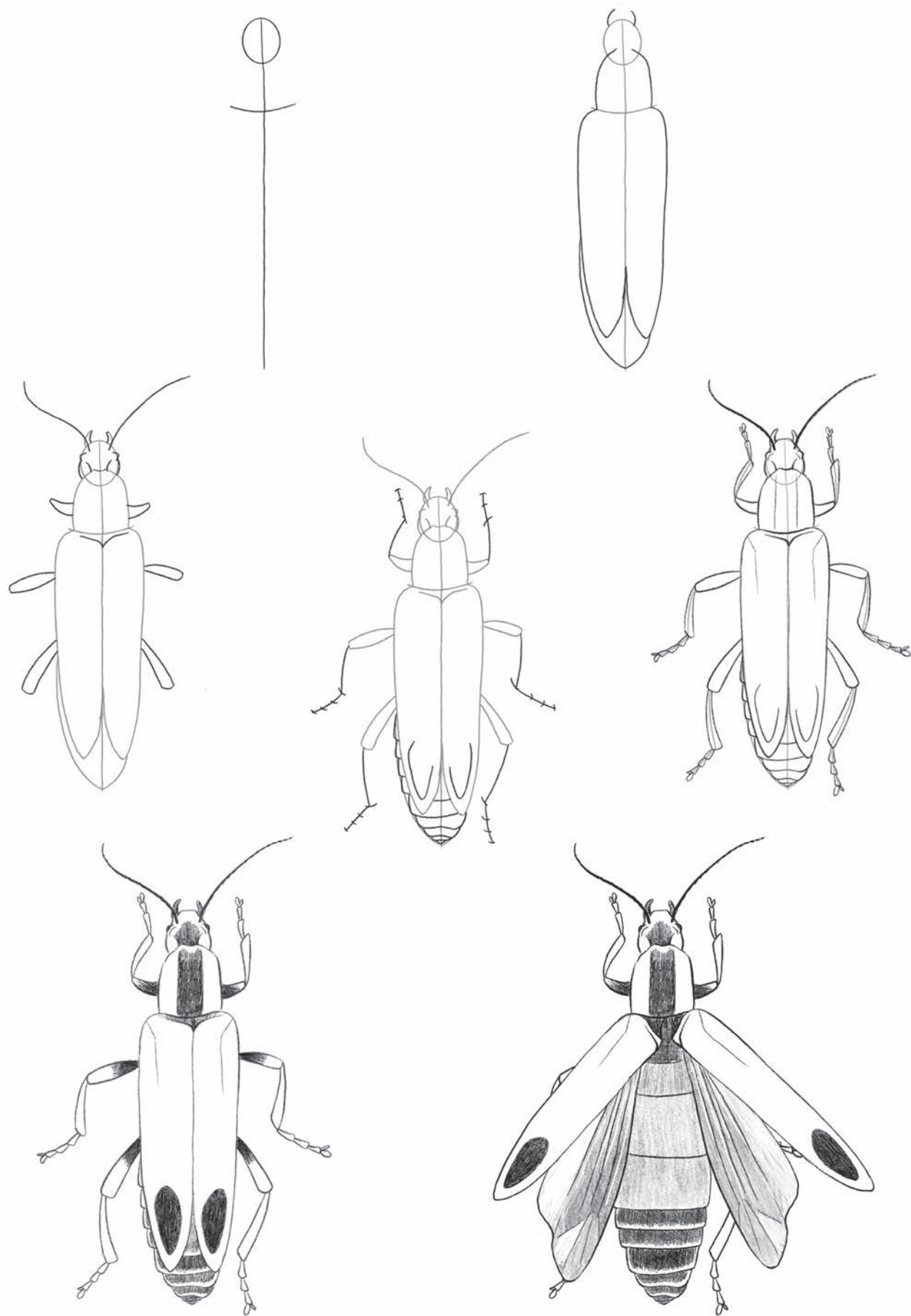


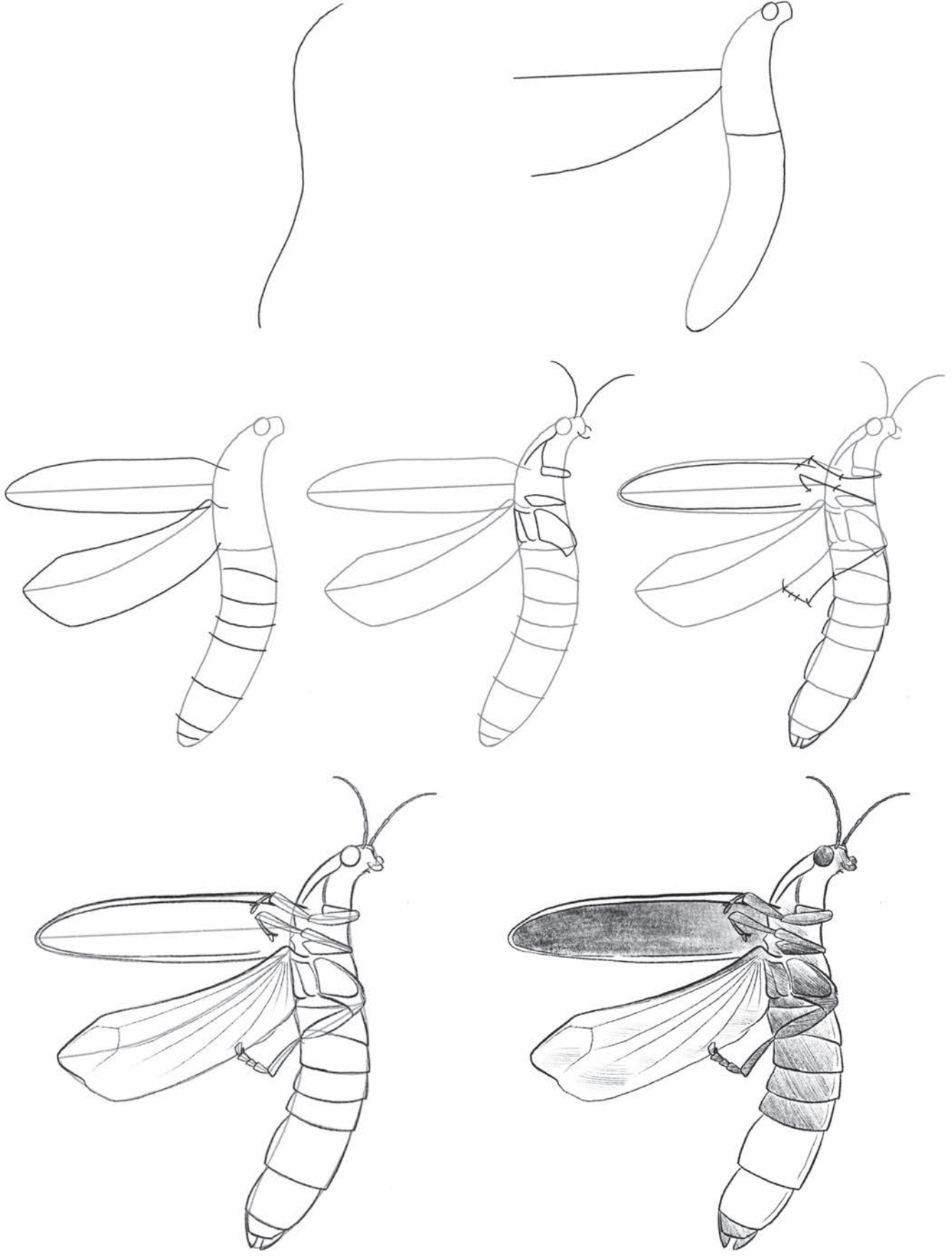


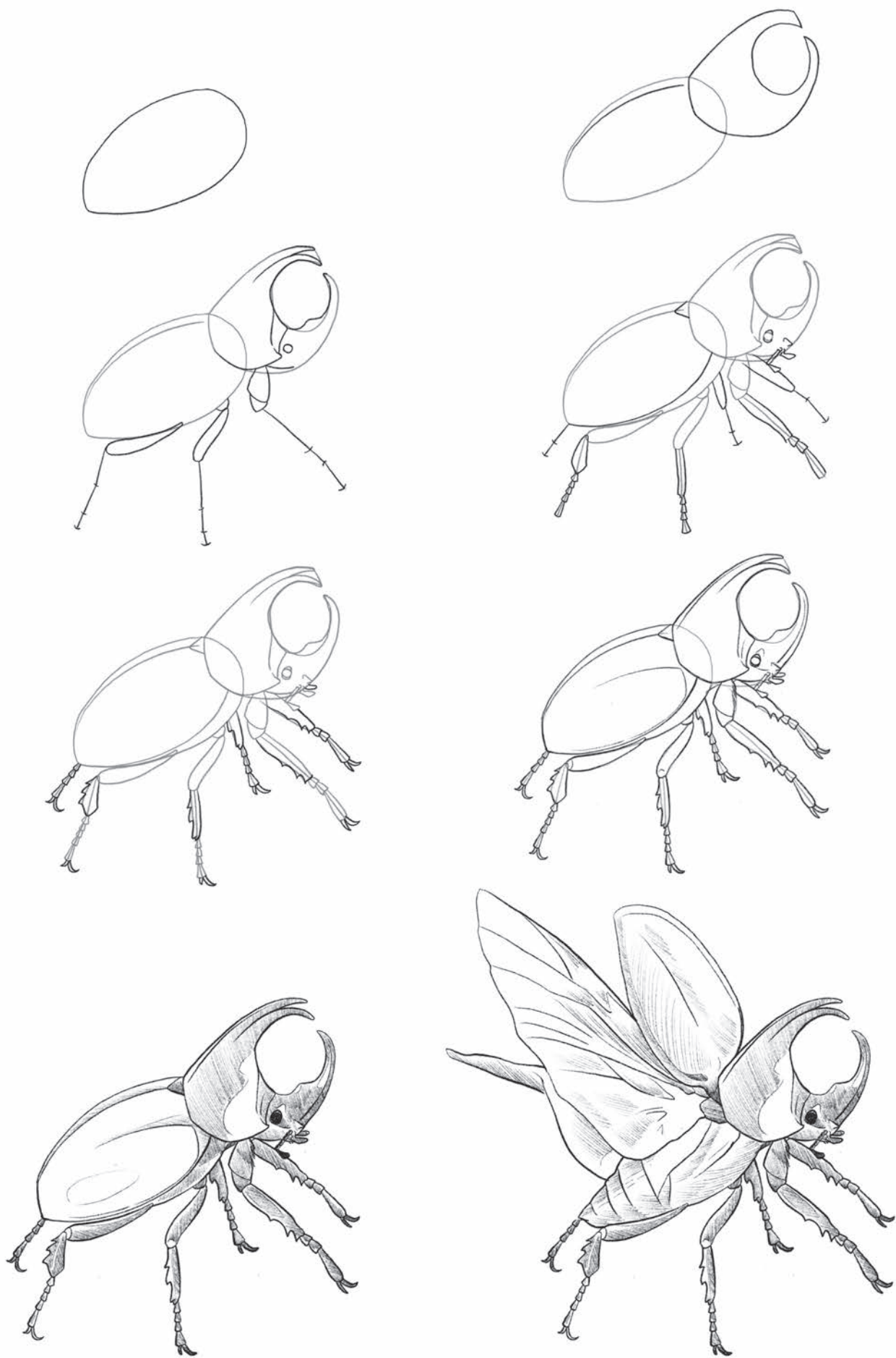




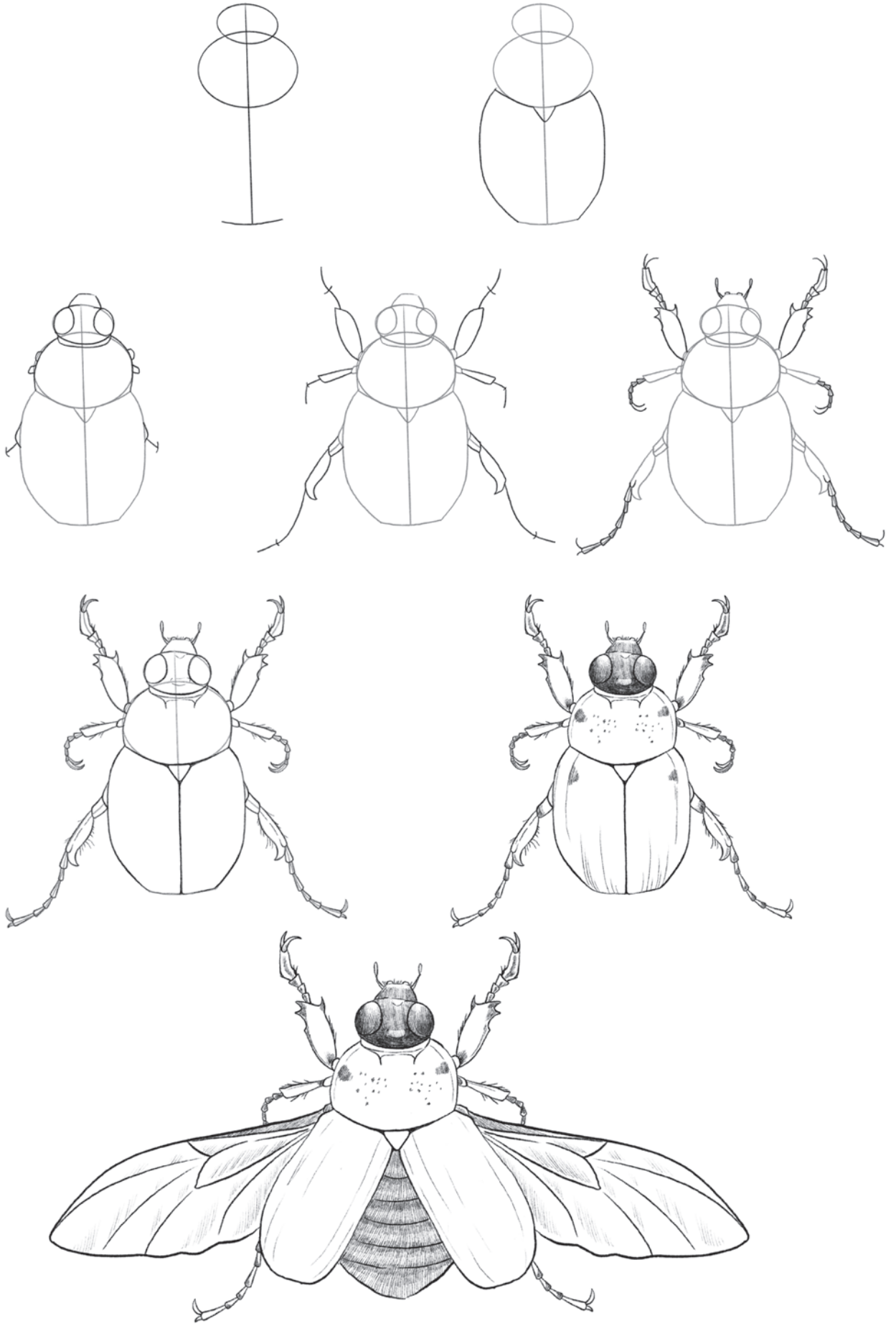


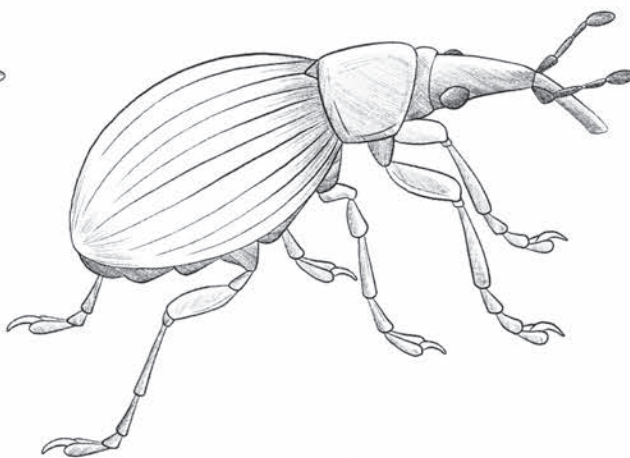
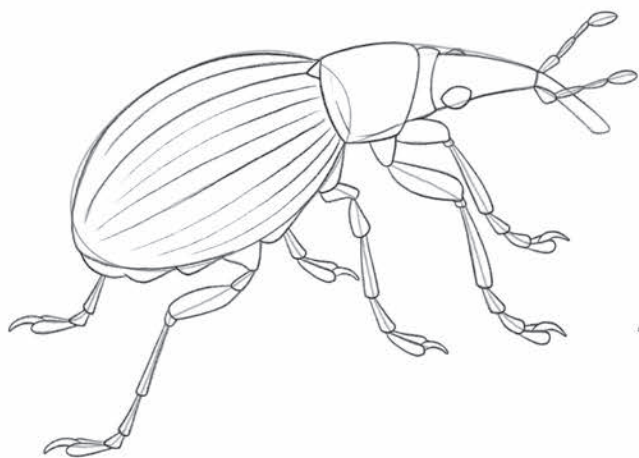
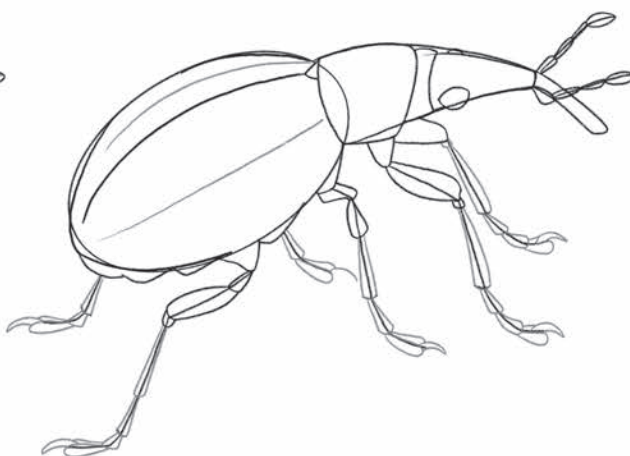
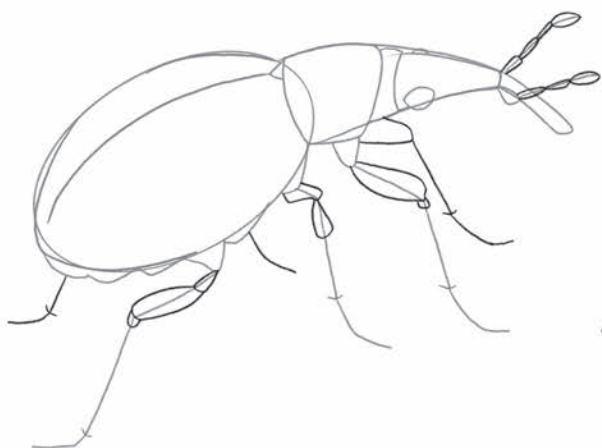
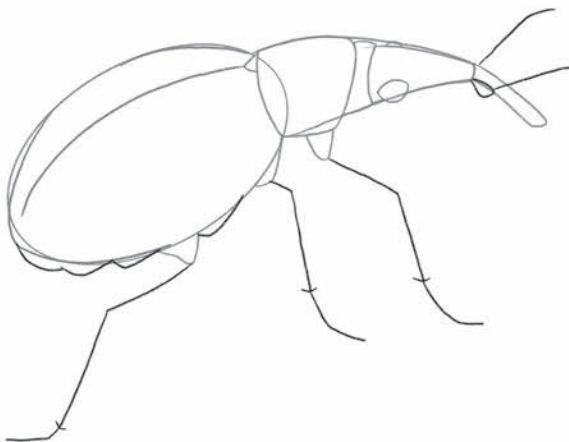
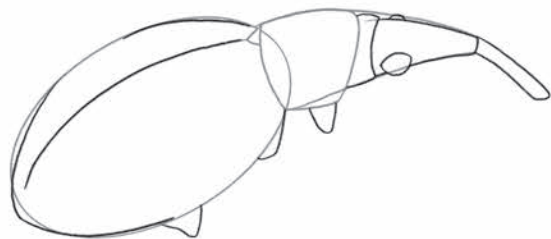
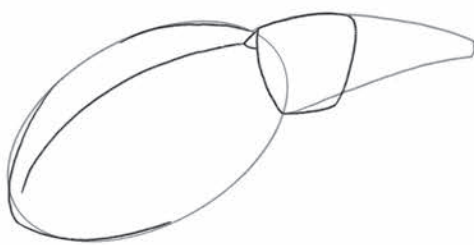
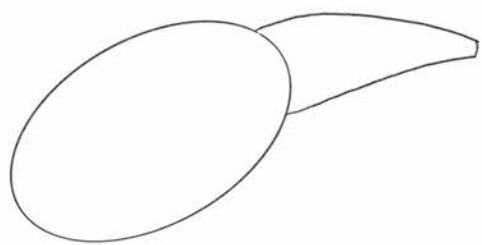


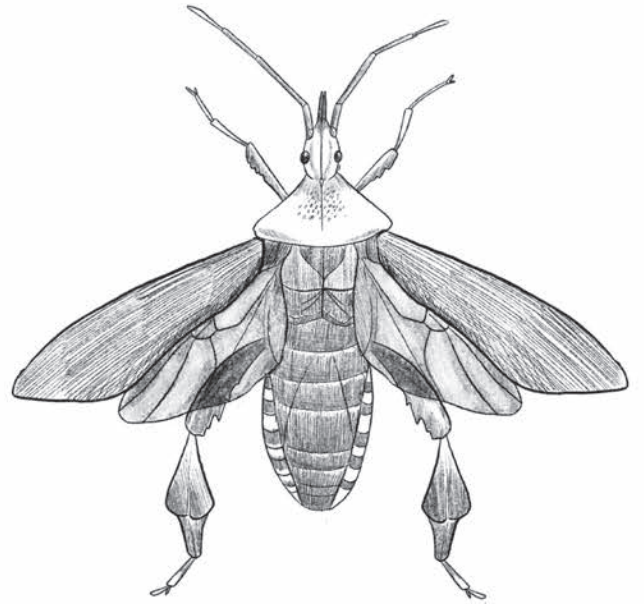
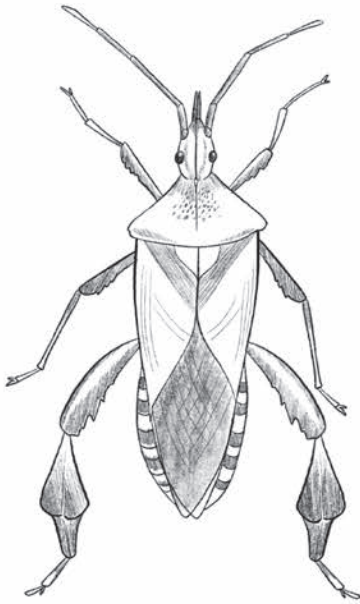
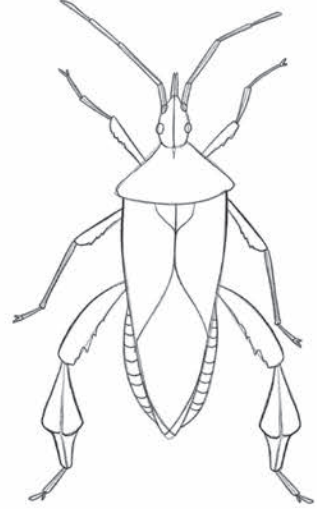
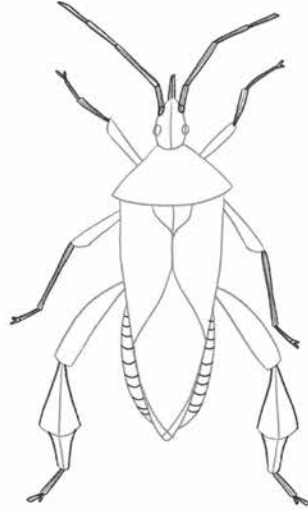
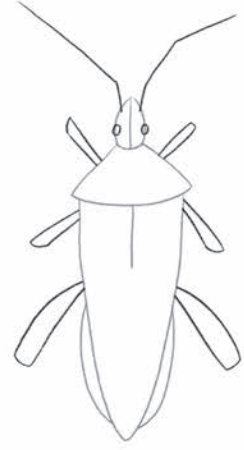


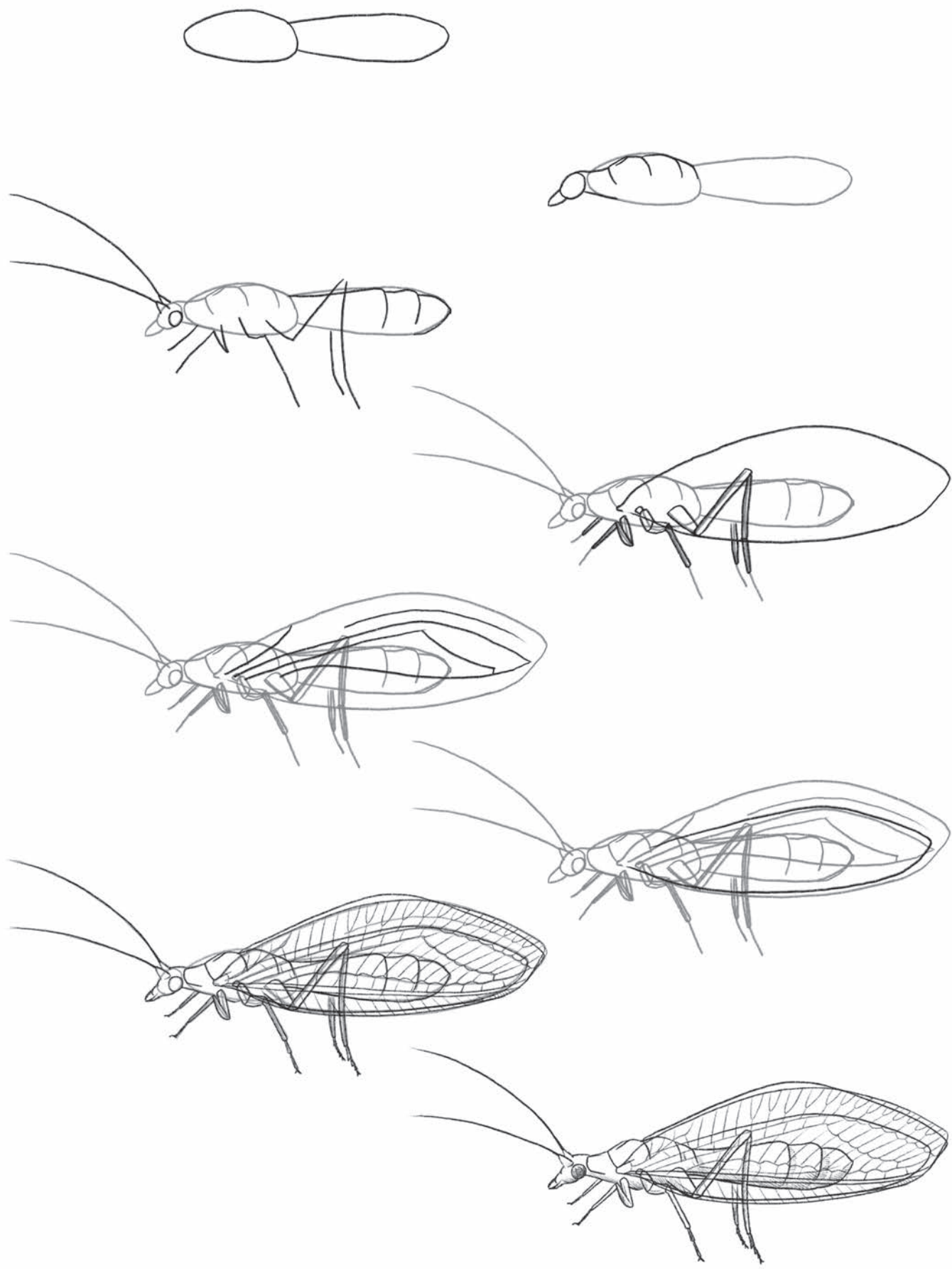




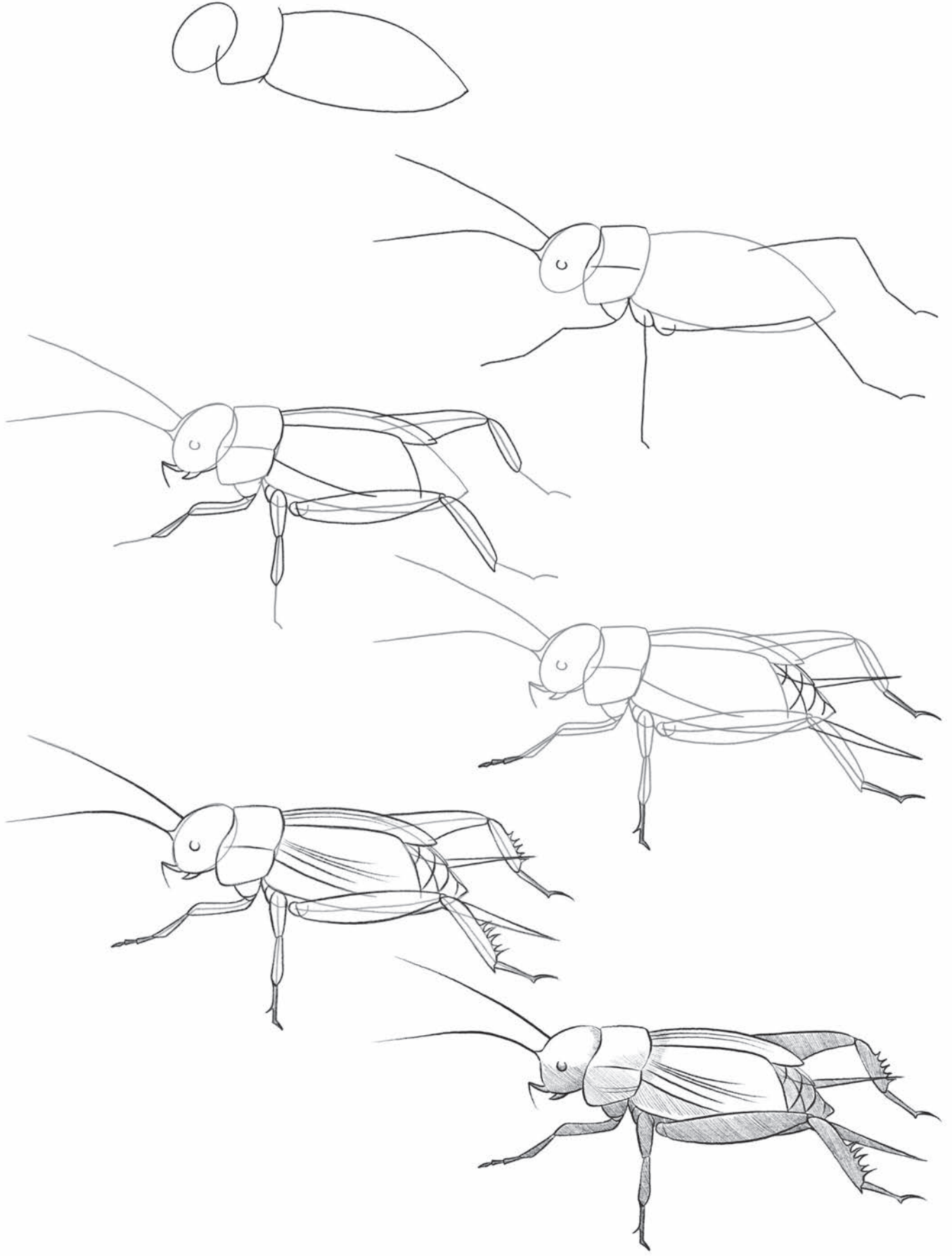


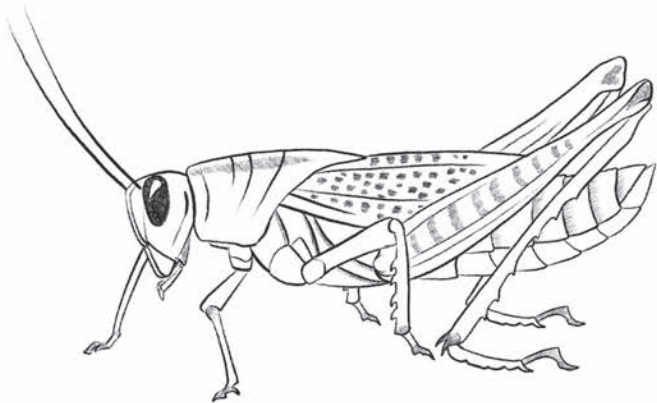
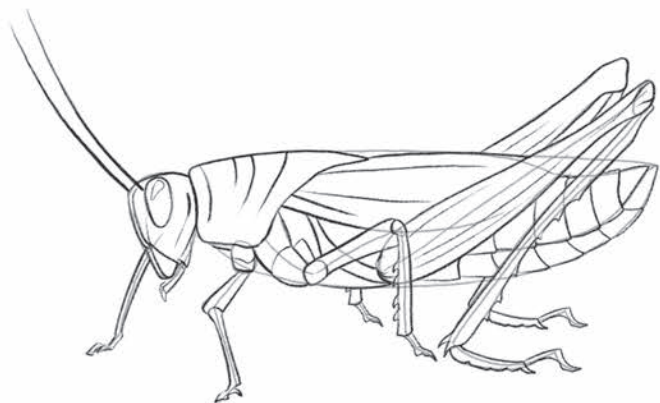
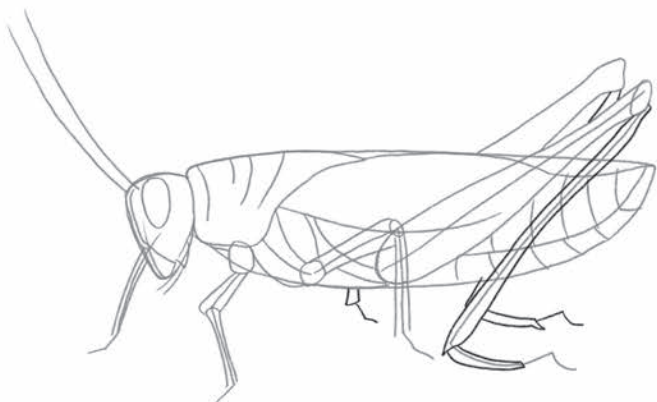
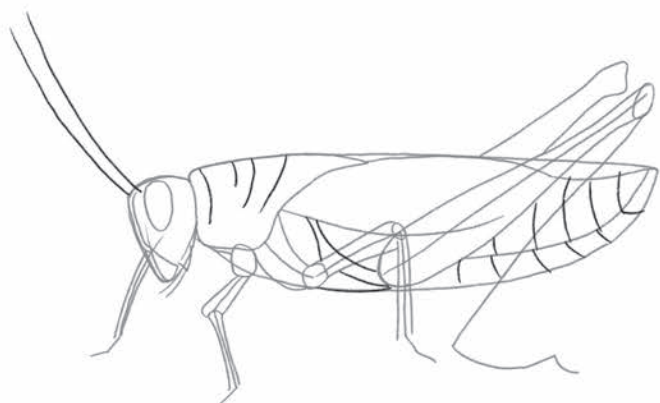
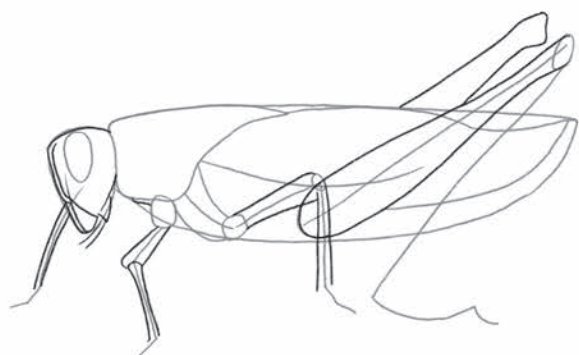
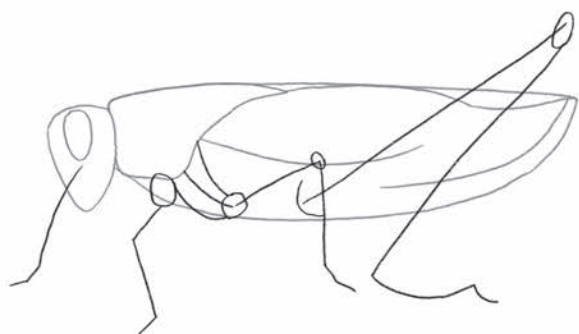
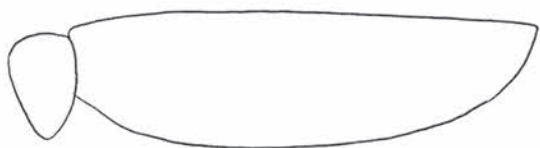


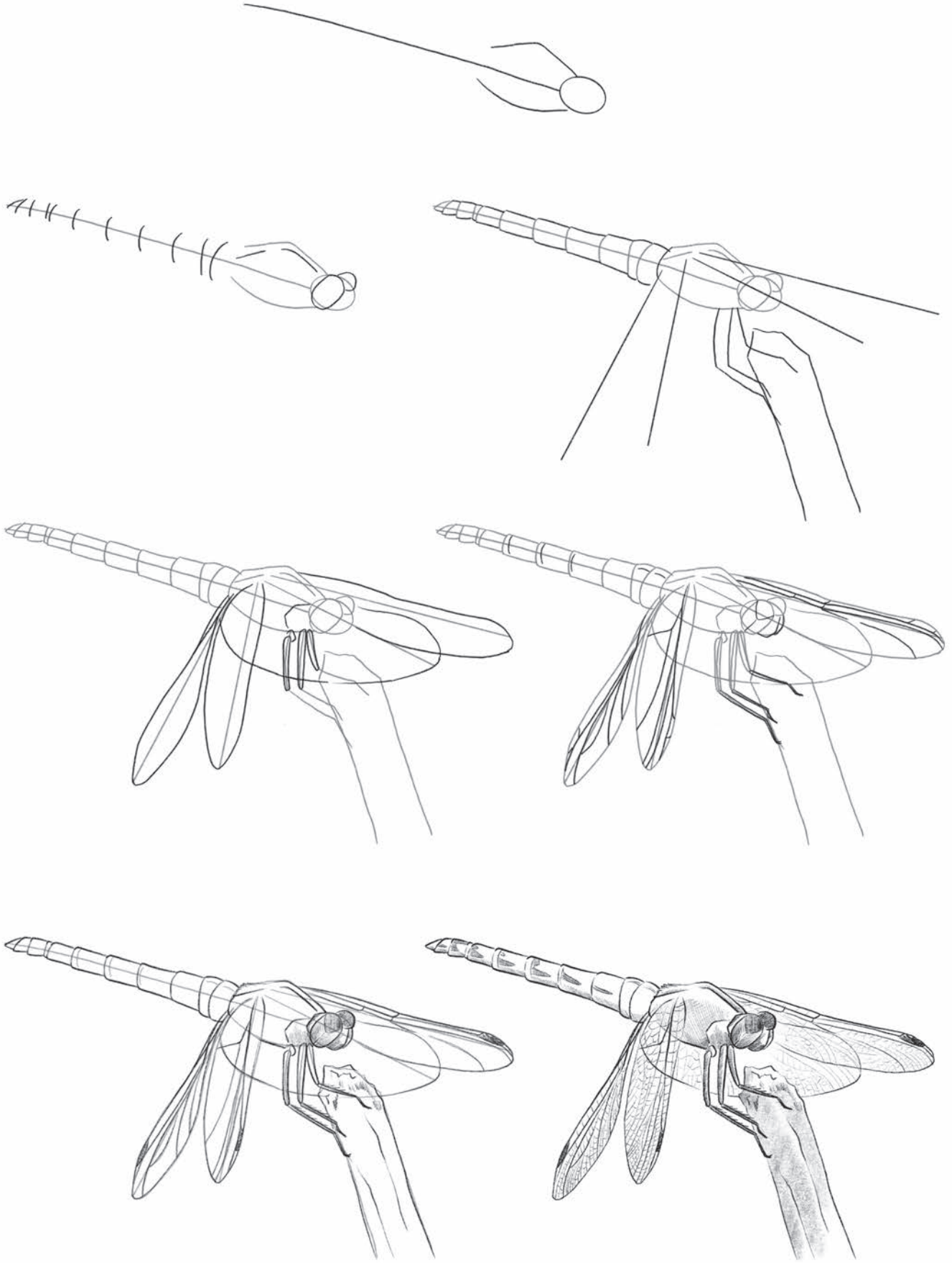


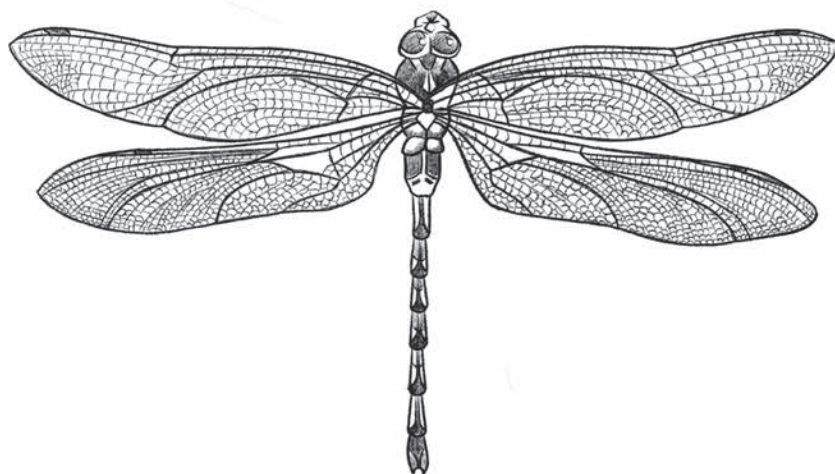
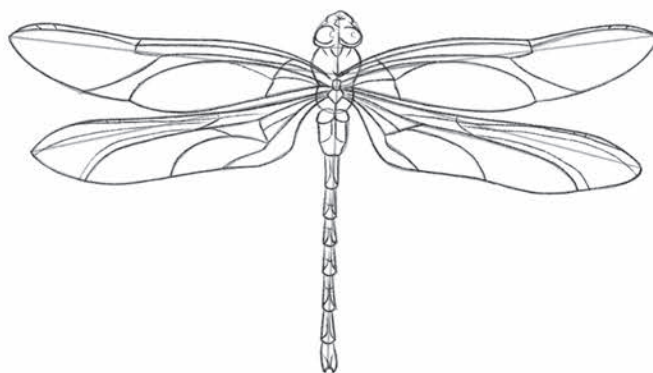
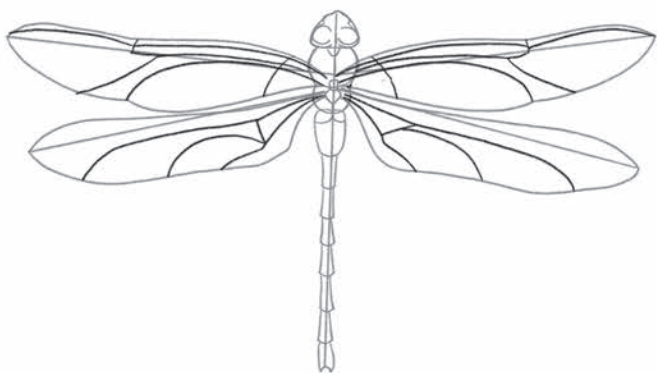
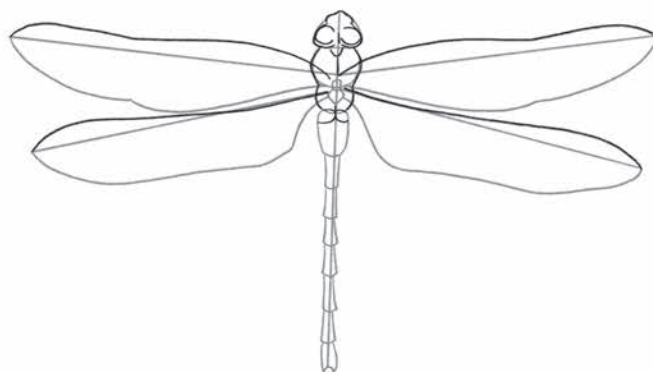
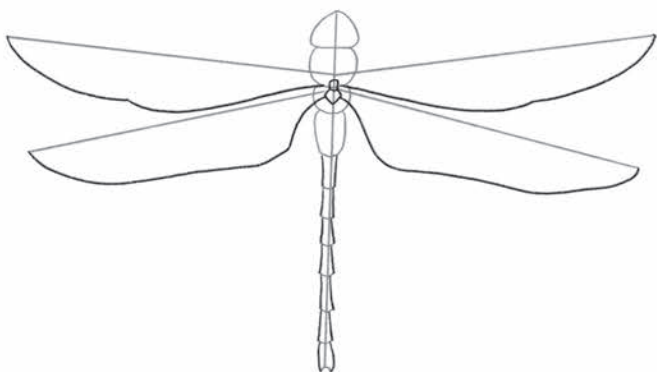
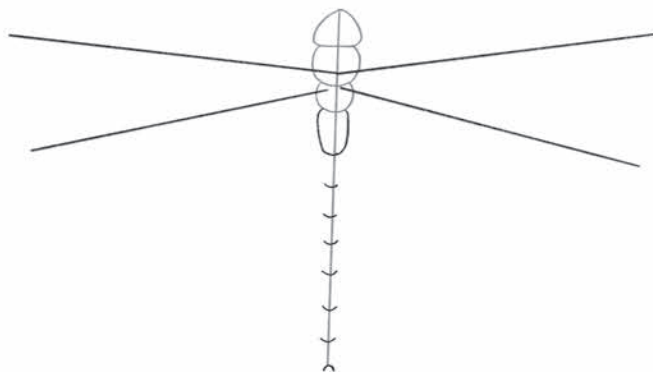




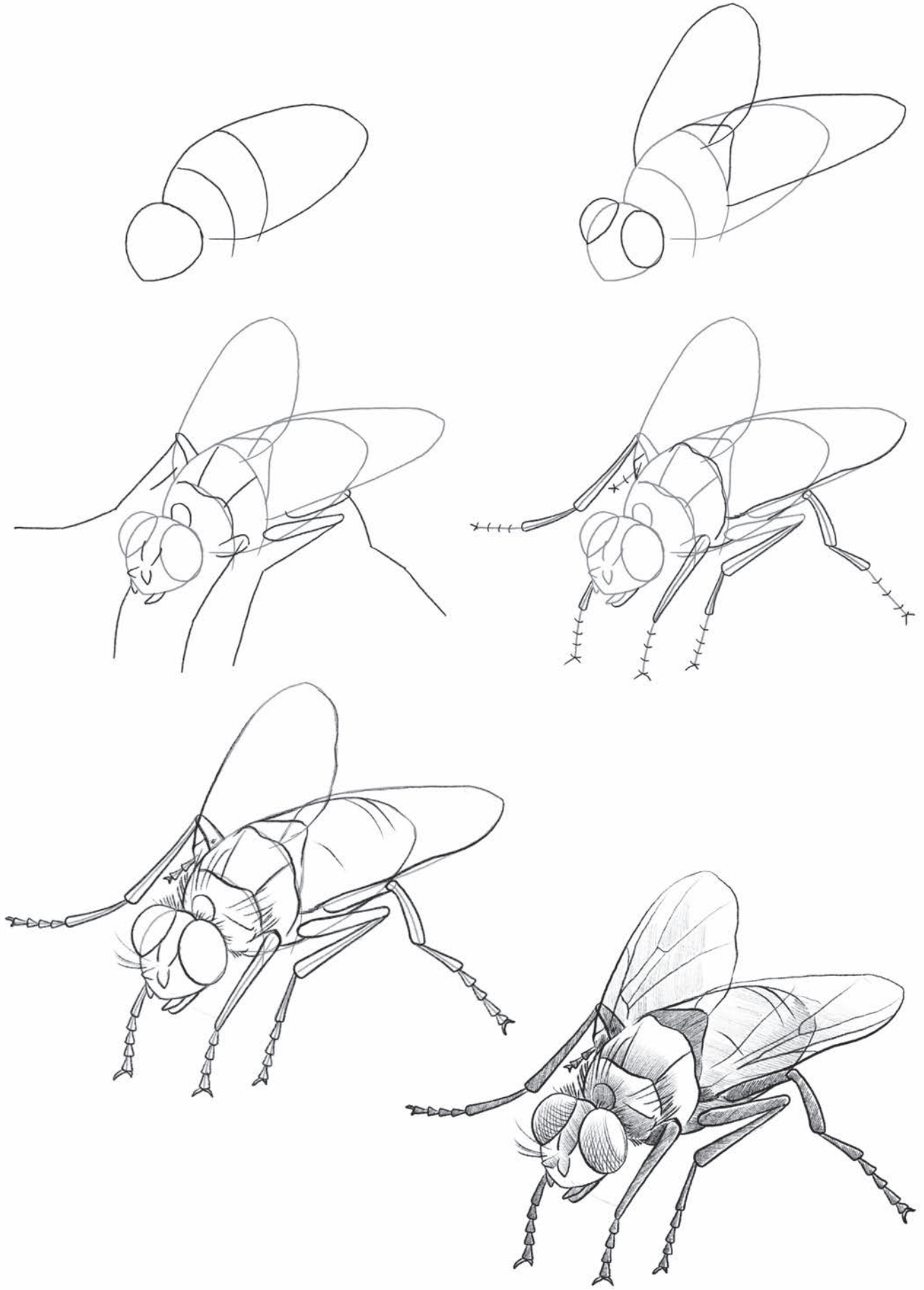




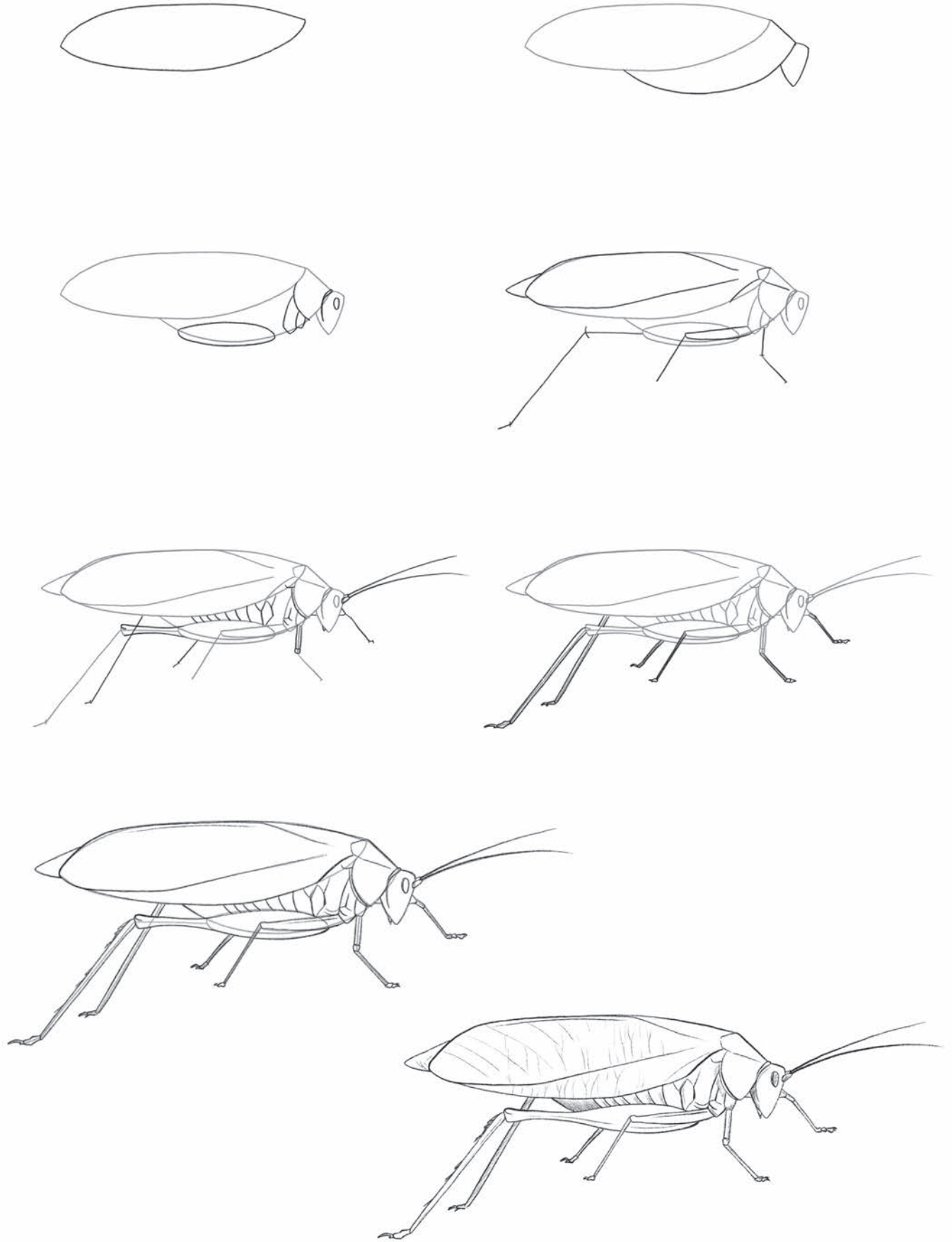


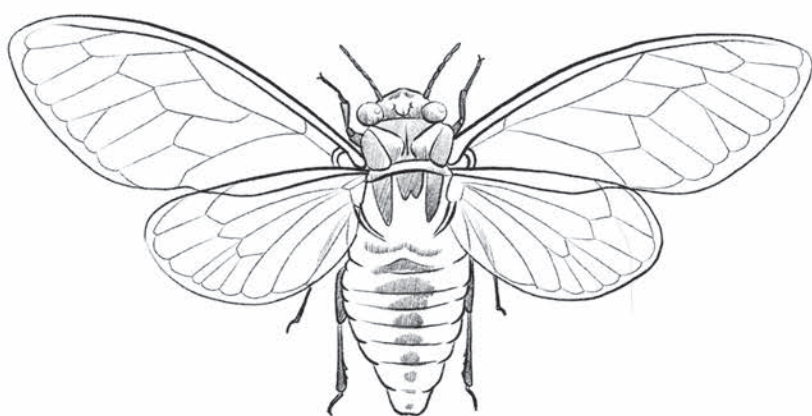
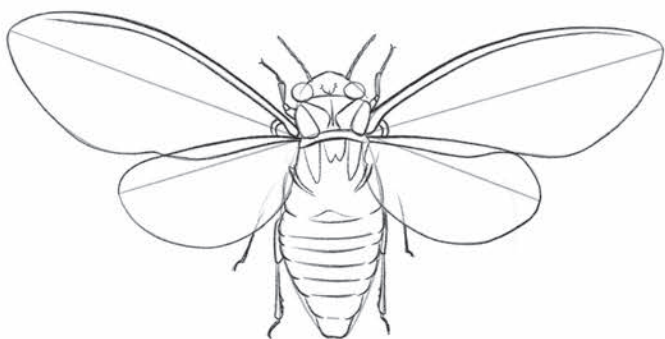
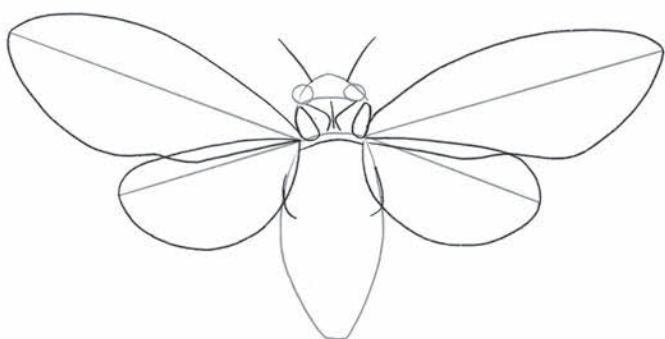
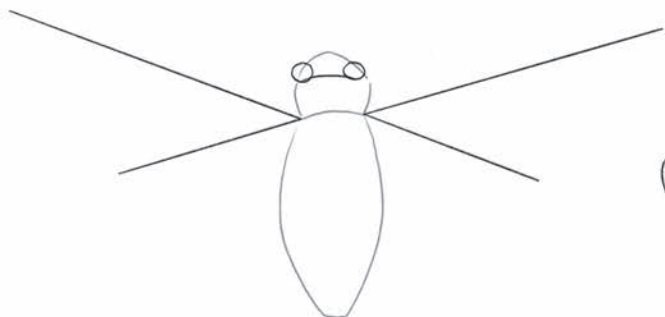




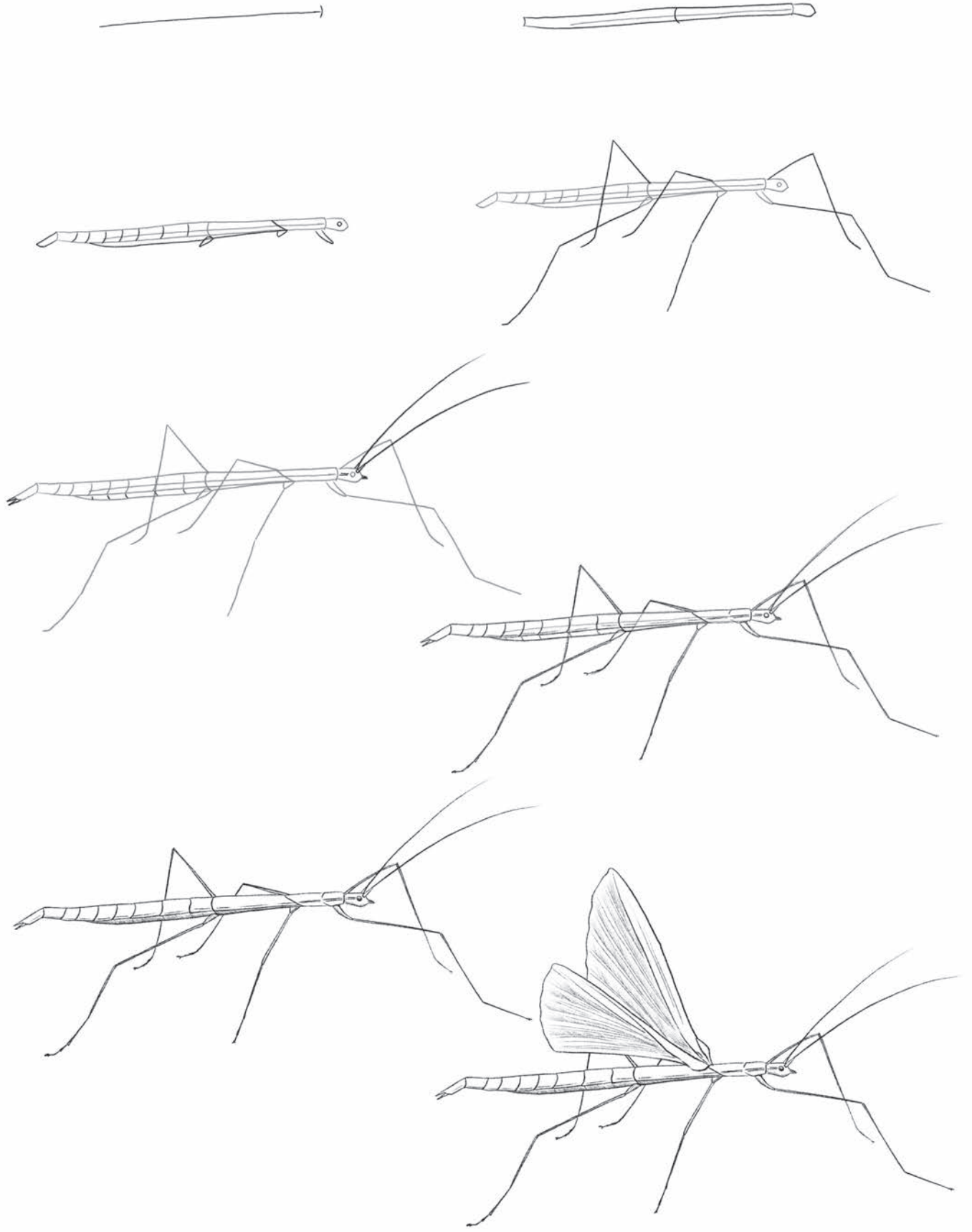












## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

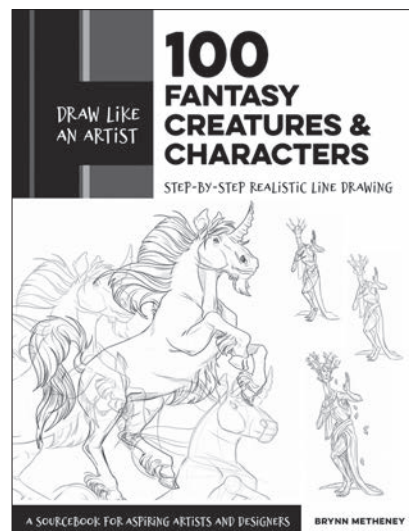
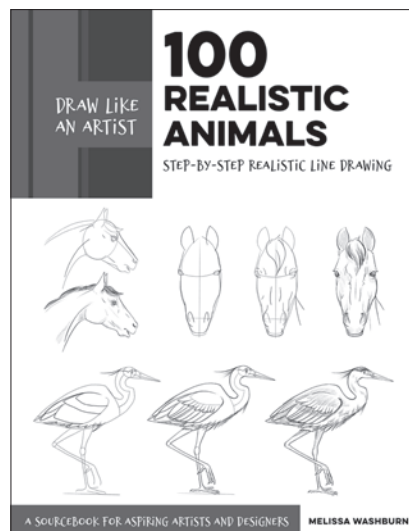
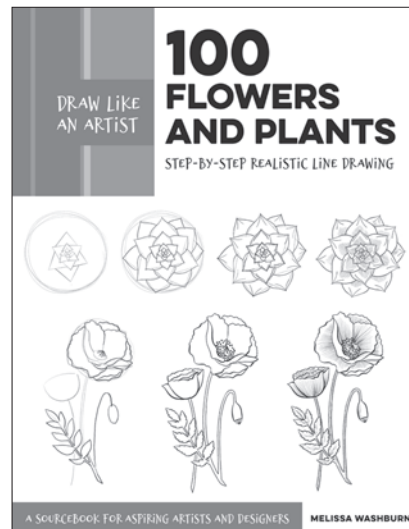
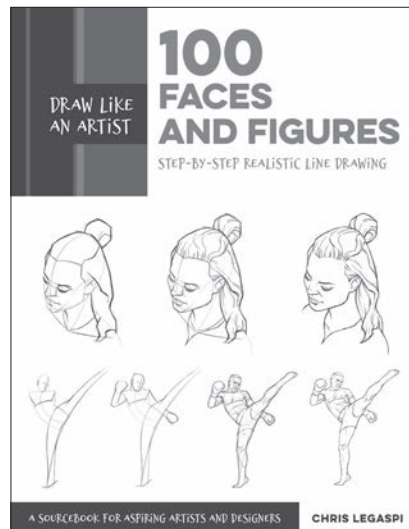
I would like to thank Joy Aquilino, Heather Godin, Lydia Anderson, and the rest of the team at Quarto for their help in guiding me through another book publishing experience. Birds and insects have a special place in my heart, so I truly loved researching and creating the illustrations for this volume of *Draw Like an Artist*. I'd also like to acknowledge the Field Museum in Chicago, whose collections were especially helpful in creating the close-up detail illustrations in this book. Thank you to my husband, Adam, for his unwavering support of my creative career from the very beginning; and to my daughter, Lily, for being a cheerleader, critical eye, and fellow explorer of the natural world. Many thanks to my colleagues at Crush Illustration for providing a professional support network that, as a freelancer, has been a lifeline these past three years. And finally, a huge thank you to my parents for giving me a childhood of hiking, camping, and playing in the woods.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Melissa Washburn** is an illustrator and graphic designer living just outside Chicago in Northwest Indiana. She grew up in upstate New York, in the foothills of the Adirondacks, but has lived in the Midwest since 1996. Her fascination with things that run, fly, and grow has led to editorial commissions for publications such as *Charlotte Home and Garden*, *Spirituality & Health* magazine, and *Smithsonian Magazine*. She continues to exhibit her work throughout Northwest Indiana as well as illustrate and design for advertising, editorial, surface pattern, and package design. Her background includes a bachelor of fine arts in painting and printmaking from Binghamton University, a master's degree in arts administration from Indiana University, coursework at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and experience as art director at advertising firm Group 7even. She was a 2012–2013 recipient of an Individual Artist Program grant from the Indiana Arts Commission. You can see more of her work at [www.melissawashburn.com](http://www.melissawashburn.com).



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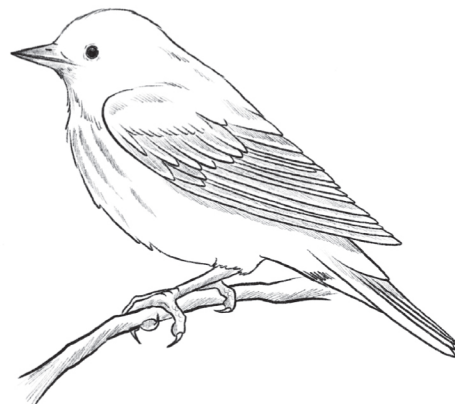
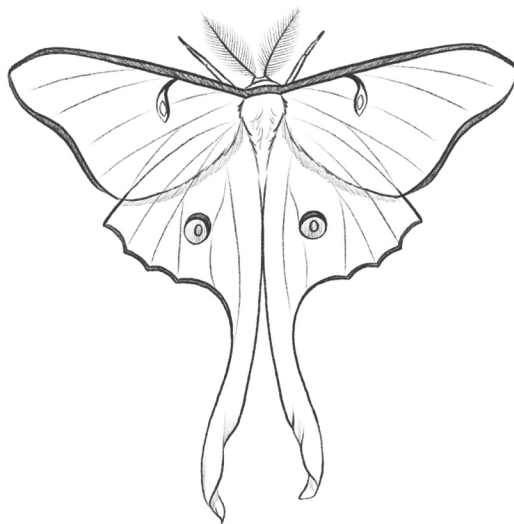
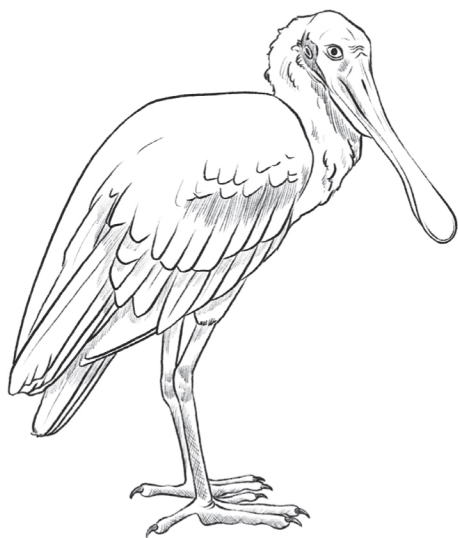


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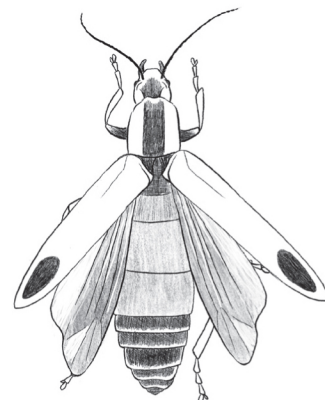


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